PROCESSED WORLD

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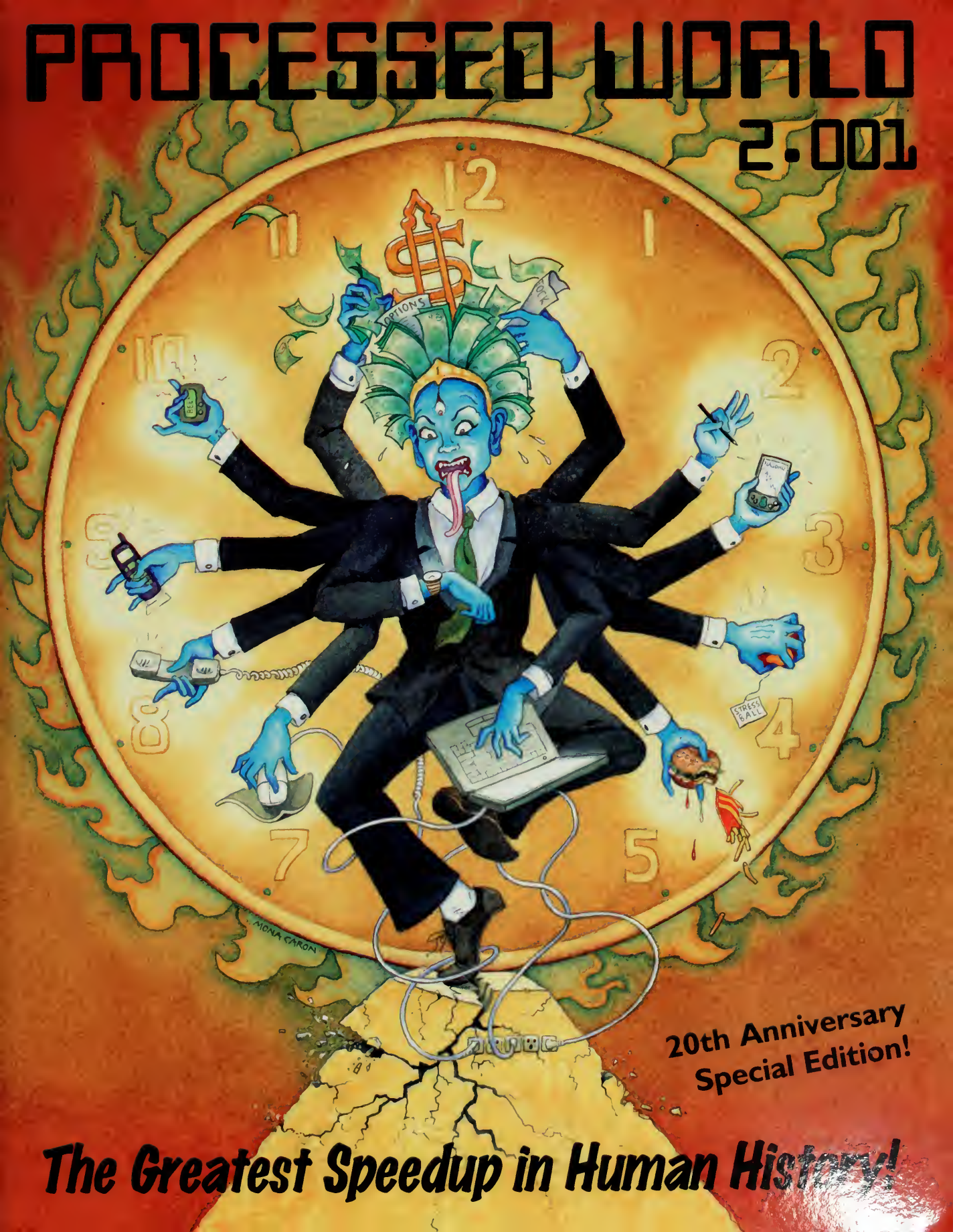

20th Anniversary Special Edition!

The Greatest Speedup in Human History!

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PROCESSED WORLD 2·001

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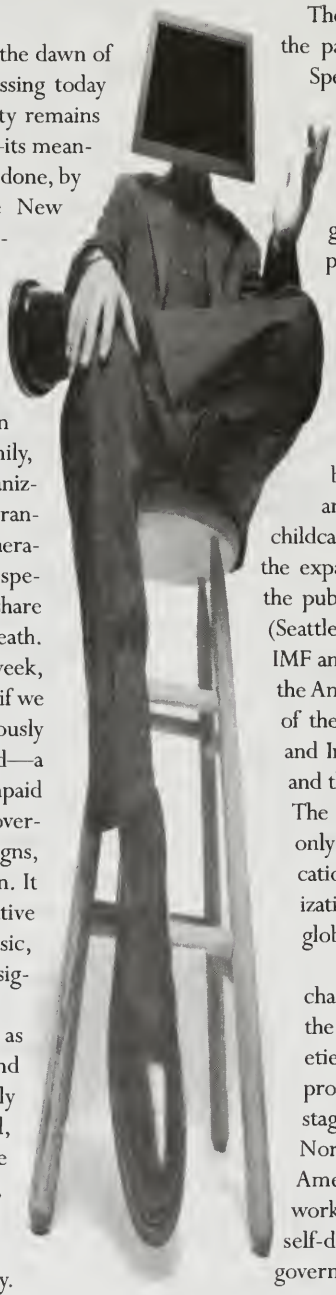
Talking Heads

We're back! It's been 20 years since the first issue of *Processed World* was sold on the streets of downtown San Francisco. We published 32 issues from 1981-1994, a body of work still in circulation as tens of thousands of magazines and increasingly available on our website. The demise of the collective after issue 32 prevented the publication of issue 33 1/3 which is on the website as of late-2000.

The issues pioneered in *Processed World* at the dawn of the so-called Information Age are more pressing today than they were when we started. Our society remains largely mute about the experience of work—its meaning, its purpose, who decides what should get done, by whom, and how. The glorification of the New Economy, reinforced by the astounding speculative bubble that has only recently burst, makes a handy target. But it only scratches the surface.

It has been a mighty effort to find the time to produce this special issue of *Processed World*. In fact, since the last issue came out in 1994, we've all been terribly busy! Work, family, writing projects, street theater, political organizing, a sprawling digital social history of San Francisco, housing crises, mid-life crises, psychotherapy, relationships. . . some of our activities are specific to us, but the larger truth is one we share with everyone: we are working ourselves to death. Most people work more than 40 hours a week, remarkably often without any extra pay. Even if we have managed to maintain a life with a previously 'normal' 40-hour week, or—heaven forbid—a part-time job (!), we tend to be busy with unpaid creative projects, raising families, fixing up overpriced homes, engaging in political campaigns, exploring the meaning of our lives, and so on. It is common to have a paid job, an unpaid creative career in writing, photography, dance or music, on top of a commitment to a family, mate or significant other.

Our social lives are as tightly scheduled as our work lives. A chance to see an old friend and catch up over lunch or dinner can easily take a half dozen communications by email, voice mail or phone tag attempting to juggle schedules. Few of us can drop in on anyone, or easily accommodate anyone dropping in on us. Fewer still have time to stop and remember that we didn't always live this way.



"Everything from novel writing to philosophizing to the experience of laboring or making a home, has to face the challenge of accelerating turnover time and the rapid write-off of traditional and historically acquired values. The temporary contract in everything then becomes the hallmark of postmodern living."

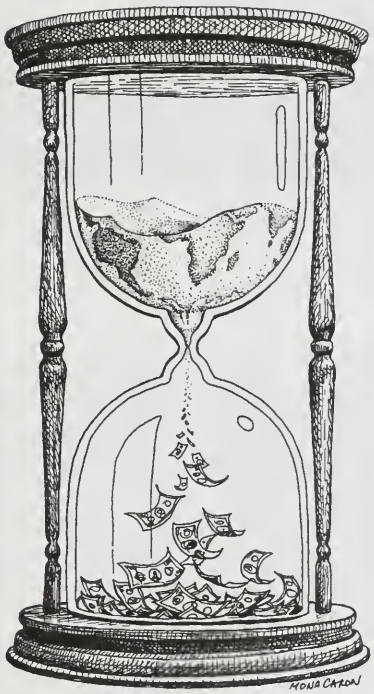
—David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity*

The radical reconfiguration of everyday life over the past generation is what we call "The Great Speedup."There are so many aspects to this phenomenon that it is difficult to quickly summarize the changes or to offer a simple or clear explanation of its causes. The great speedup encompasses much more than the greater number of hours we work, both as paid wage-workers and as free humans grasping for meaning and fulfillment. The dramatic intensification of work, ostensibly because computers have made us so much more productive, is one example. The expansion of buying and selling into more hours of the day (the 24 hour supermarket being a visible example) as well as into more areas of human life (therapy, prepared foods, childcare, housecleaners, etc.) are others. Further, the expansion of the world market, dramatized by the public protests at international trade meetings (Seattle—WTO; Washington DC and Prague—IMF and World Bank; Quebec—Free Trade Area of the Americas, FTAA), is reaching every last corner of the globe, from the exploding cities of China and India to the remotest regions of the Amazon and the tropical forests of Indonesia and Malaysia. The world market is several centuries old, but only in the past quarter century have communications technologies combined with containerization and falling trade barriers to make the global factory a reality.

The intensity and speed of these global changes have disrupted societies everywhere. In the Third World, traditional agricultural societies are enduring the enclosures and forced proletarianization that characterized the earliest stages of the industrial revolution in Europe and North America. Meanwhile, in Europe, North America and all earlier industrialized areas, working class communities with various forms of self-defense and control—from trade unions to government regulations—have been systematical-

ly uprooted and broken down. Classical Marxism would call this the decomposition of the working class. During the 1990s, the consolidation of media ownership reinforced a self-congratulatory ideological offensive that brazenly declared the end of history. Culturally (esp. in the United States) all vestiges of class awareness were buried under a cacophony of triumphalist capitalism. Everyone was either middle class, insanely rich or living in such poverty that it could only be understood as the moral failure of those who let themselves fall so low in a society so rife with opportunity. That real wages have fallen since 1973 and many more people are much poorer today than they were a generation ago is conveniently ignored. Our ability to understand our condition as a shared predicament, a class-wide experience rather than an individual and isolated phenomenon, is at an all-time low.

> "Capital flight, deindustrialization of some regions, and the industrialization of others, the destruction of traditional working class communities as power bases in class struggle, become leitmotifs of spatial transformation under more flexible conditions of accumulation."
>
> —David Harvey,
> *The Condition of Post-Modernity*



graphic by Mona Caron

In hindsight we can see that the real turning point came in the early 1970s. The social movements lumped under the misleading rubric of "the sixties" had climaxed. New technologies in communications and transportation combined with the re-emergence of world market competition to begin the decades-long process of radically expanding globalization. Living standards for working people reached their peak around 1973 and have fallen ever since on an aggregate scale. (In the U.S. the minimum wage has fallen by 40% in real spending power since that time). Old style industrial production underwent rapid restructuring, accelerating and expanding all the way to the present. The demise of old industrial centers and the accompanying disintegration of working class communities throughout the U.S. and Europe were essential components of a powerful attack by capital that ultimately broke down the "deal" in place since WWII. Political economists have labeled this the move from Fordism-Keynesianism to a regime of "flexible accumulation," in which capital has decentralized production around the globe while increasing concentration of wealth and power.

The rise of temporariness and precarious work arrangements (first addressed in *PW* #2, summer 1981, "The Rise of the Six-Month Worker") has forced us to internalize the values of capitalist business and apply them to the one resource we "control": our labor power. Thus we have to be flexible, multi-skilled multi-taskers, able to continually master new skills and technologies. R. Dennis Hayes, a prolific contributor to *Processed World* from issue 10-23 (and author of *Behind the Silicon Curtain: The Seductions of Work in a Lonely Era*, South End Press 1989), returns with this issue's lead article "Farce or Figleaf? The Promise of Leisure in the Computer Age." Hayes takes on the glowing claims and real catastrophe imposed on daily life in the U.S. by the Great Speedup. In the process he reveals that the New Economy has no clothes.

Jesse Drew (issue 14) returns with a critique of distance education in "Fast Times at Ronald McDonald U." He details how the introduction of information technology becomes a mediated way to produce education for sale. It is woefully inadequate as a replacement for the live teacher-student-classroom experience, and a glaring example of the overall corporatization of university life.

Howard Besser examines the misuse of copyright law to shed light on the regrettably obscure battle over intellectual property rights in cyberspace. His research shows that the current business-driven agenda to protect intellectual property is a direct contravention of copyright's original intent. Moreover, it represents an enclosure of the public commons that so many have expected of the Internet.

In "Space Wars," Tom Wetzel (*PW* 12 and others) starts from San Francisco's Mission District to illuminate the vicious battle over the cost of space, and its role in intensifying class divisions in the city. His story of the Dotcom Boom and Bust and how it has permanently altered the landscape of the city is a key part of the extreme speedup imposed by the so-called New Economy. Zoe Noe offers a brief memoir of his early days in San Francisco in the long-ago early 1980s—a time when you could land here without money or a job and find your way.

San Francisco is home to Critical Mass, the monthly bike-in that has spread to some 100-odd cities worldwide. Few realize, however, that a century earlier San Franciscans took to their bicycles by the thousands to demand good roads and asphalt! The 1896 Good Roads/Bicycle Movement gets a look from Hank Chapot in "The Great San Francisco Bicycle Protest of 1896." (It is curiously ironic that the bicycling movement at the end of the 19th century opened the way for the car culture that contemporary bicyclists are critiquing at the end of the 20th century.)

photos by D.S. Black

The bicyclists' critical but hopeful sensibility finds its most inspiring expression in the Duboce Bikeway Mural of San Francisco's middle hills, a two-story, 360 foot-long panorama depicting the path followed by most bicyclists on their way west from downtown. The path follows the bed of a vanished creek, one of many ecological connections brought out in this uniquely effective project of the SF Bicycle Coalition. Check out our interview with the artists in "The Wiggle Mural," and then check out the mural as it was meant to be seen: on two wheels!

The Billboard Liberation Front returns to *Processed World* (their how-to manual graced the pages of *PW* #25) with a manifesto and history of their jarring interventions into the public space of billboard advertising. Other public artists from the SF Print Collective and the California Department of Corrections show up throughout the issue.

In "Green Days in the Concrete Jungle," documentary filmmaker Ted White takes a break from chronicling the bike movement to give us the true confessions of a *gangsta floribunda*, tending to the ferns, agave and lavender beds of homeowners too busy to enjoy their own gardens.

Of course, it's not just homeowners who are too busy to appreciate their surroundings. Workers of all types aren't getting out much these days—and if they do it's never far from a laptop and cell phone. Tales of Toil by Netizen X ("My Life in the Search Engine"), Clayton Peacock ("The Filing Cabinet is on Fire") and Texas Frank ("Notes on an Outstanding Day at Image") reveal the daily experiences of an overworked, email-driven generation who rarely question the economic system until their company tanks, their disk crashes, or they find themselves out on the street harassing pedestrians for cash and pushing shampoo.

The good news is that catastrophes aren't always necessary to throw inequities of capital and labor into relief. Resistance still appears in the most unexpected places—including Canada's third largest university and the network help desk of General Electric. Read about it in Hot Under the Collar, where our correspondent recounts a spontaneous act of solidarity among his colleagues, and concludes, "Revolution is about living differently, not as isolated individuals, but in struggle."

That message reappears in this issue's final essay, in which *PW*'s usual suspect, Chris Carlsson, takes a critical look at 20 years of political activity, urging radicals to create living examples of the world for which they're fighting. Special kudos to Mona Caron for her wonderful cover, simultaneously lampooning the hero of economics textbooks Joseph Schumpeter and the adoration so widely heaped on the deified New Economy. Klipschutz returns (*PW* 4 and on) with some wonderful poems, but also saved you, dear reader, from a great deal of under-edited, over-inflated prose, thanks to his steady copy-editing hand. Adam Cornford, one of *ProcessedWorld*'s founders is back, too, with a couple of remarkable poems. And James Brook appears for the first time with an incisive series of short poems largely composed on the streets of San Francisco during the recent New Economy tidal wave. Marina Lazzara and Thomas Daulton contribute our fictional pieces this time.

This 20th anniversary issue of *PW* was produced by a persistent, shifting, shifty, shiftless collective who had a lot of fun doing another *Processed World*. And no one, save the printer, got paid.

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Farce or Figleaf?

The Promise of Leisure in the Computer Age

by R. Dennis Hayes

> *It became apparent that industrialism was moving toward a degree of mechanization in which fewer and fewer men need be, or indeed could be, employed. And that the result of that development must, of physical neccessity, be a civilization in which all men would work less and enjoy more.*[1]
>
> Archibald MacLeish, February 1933

Are *you* working, as the computer ads say, "smarter and faster"? Is faster smarter? Is working longer hours better? Your answers, disavowed by economists and government statisticians, provide clues to a striking paradox at the start of the 21st century.

In an era of undeniable technological advance, Americans work as hard as they did four generations ago. Harder, in fact, than anyone in the industrialized world according to the most recent International Labor Organization (ILO) survey: nearly 70% of Americans work more than 40 hours per week, compared to 50 % in Japan, 16% in France, and 14% in Germany.

Sociologists and public thinkers in the 1960s and 70s foretold a coming era of leisure owing to computerized automation. It was to be the sequel to the labor-saving mechanization of the Industrial Age. Others predicted a dark side to workplace automation: enforced joblessness.

Neither scenario has played out. Instead, a world of digitally assisted work opened wide and swallowed us. Today we are living in a go-go realm of overwork that extends instantly and intimately into personal life. "Where the office begins is up to you," a Sprint PCS wireless web service ad beckons. "I don't take sick days," vows a worker in another (Microsoft). "[I]n a world that runs on Internet time, every minute not spent working is 60 seconds wasted," reports a *New York Times* journalist. The shared premise of these and countless similar messages? *Work is available anytime, anywhere: are you?*

Instead of confronting the promise and problems of automation, we are locked in an awkward embrace with computerization, stuck with more work, not more free time. To appreciate the paradox—to see that there even is a paradox—we must return to the Industrial Age of the century just passed.

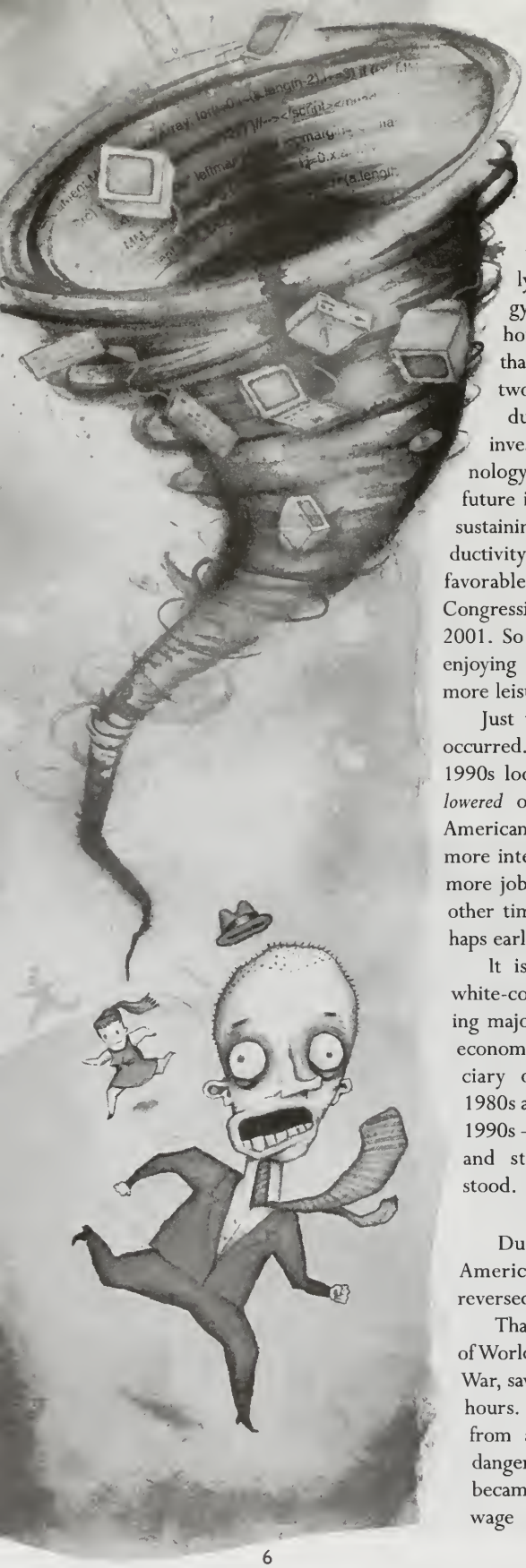
* * *

During the Great Depression, American journalist, playwright and poet Archibald MacLeish had the audacity to announce "the first human hope industrialism has offered." MacLeish wrote these words in February, 1933 when workplaces were shuttered, the banking system lay in ruin, and without a safety net, millions endured a deepening economic crisis.

Chris Carlsson

MacLeish found hope in a trend that emerged in the "Roaring 20s," which, like the 1990s, witnessed a glamorous economic boom. As part of that boom, sweeping changes had transformed the industrial workplace and that is what caught MacLeish's attention. Finally, over two decades of investment in the era's marvels—the electric motor, the light bulb, petrochemicals, the internal combustion machine, and the telephone—were paying off. In short, productivity—output per hour worked—grew phenomenally in the 1920s.

Today, after another technological great leap forward and after the longest economic boom in recorded U.S. history,



credulous observers cite hopeful government figures comparable to those that MacLeish found in the 1920s. Statistics erroneously suggest that white collar workers, including those who work most closely with information technology, work an average of only 33 hours per week. They suggest that since 1995, after a lapse of two decades, workplace productivity is again soaring, that investment in information technology has finally paid off and the future is bright. "The prospects for sustaining strong advances in productivity in the years ahead remain favorable," Alan Greenspan told a Congressional Committee in February 2001. So then, are we working less, enjoying more free time, with even more leisure in the offing?

Just the opposite seems to have occurred. In fact, the long boom of the 1990s looks like something that was *lowered* on worker and workplace. Americans are working longer hours, more intensely, less efficiently, and at more jobs per household than at any other time since the 1920s and perhaps earlier.

It is the harried world of the white-collar worker — the just arriving majority in our service-oriented economy and supposedly the beneficiary of "re-engineering" in the 1980s and "office automation" in the 1990s — that American economists and statisticians have misunderstood.

* * *

During the last 25 years, Americans quietly but furiously reversed a remarkable trend.

That trend, dating from the end of World War II through the Vietnam War, saw a steady reduction in work hours. For most, work remained far from agreeable: hard, boring, or dangerous. Yet in the late 1940s, it became possible to earn a living wage working eight hours a day, five days a week. In an era dominated by single-breadwinner families, household income rose steadily, too. MacLeish's hope seemed to be materializing. Several related phenomena accounted for this.

Chief among them was productivity, which soared during the 1950s and 60s, picking up where it left off in the 1920s. More was being made from less labor. Theoretically, this made possible a truce in class warfare: with productivity and output rising due to ongoing "mechanization," workers' incomes and corporate profits could rise together while prices remained low. It was a political economy that endorsed the social contract of the post-WWII era and lent credibility to Kennedy's "rising tide lifts all boats."

Making good on the promise of less work and rising incomes required a robust labor movement. Crucially, perhaps, the unionized workplace and the New Deal had secured overtime pay for wage workers. "Time-and-a-half" for overtime dissuaded business from re-extending the workday. It also served as an inducement to increase productivity through capital investment. White collar workers–exempt from laws requiring overtime pay by virtue of their salaried status–were still a minority. Their overtime remained "free."

Then something happened that economists still cannot quite explain. By the end of the 1970s, the basis for MacLeish's hope for industrialism was eroding and the remarkable trend had begun to unravel. Longer work hours and sagging productivity afflicted the 1980s. By 1992, Juliet Schor noticed in *The Overworked American* that we were already working more than we had in 1950. "If present trends continue," she reckoned, "by the end of the century Americans will be spending as much time at their jobs as they did back in the 1920s."

In the 1990s, the trend not only continued, it gained momentum. According to reputable, independent surveys that poll workers directly, we are now working more hours per full

Hugh D'Andrade

time job—flirting with 50 hours per week as a national average—and at more jobs per household—two-to-three job households are now mainstream—than in the 1950-60s.

The reversal is significant. It can be gauged by adding the hours that today's multi-job household spends working each week then comparing the total with hours worked by historical American households. Take, for instance, a software programmer who works 50 to 60 hours per week. Add a partner working part-time—25 to 30 hours per week—temping at a law firm. This typical contemporary household works twice as many hours as households did in the 1950s, more still than households in the 1920s. In fact, we would have to reach back to the pre-Ford Industrialism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to find household workweeks of comparable hours.

The decline of union representation explains some of the reversal. Still, organized labor's fortunes reflect an ebb and flow that is now decades old. the ebb of unions' traditional base — blue-collar jobs — and the flow of the new, volatile service sector jobs that Industrial Age unions have been unable or unwilling to organize.

Clearly, the increase in work hours and jobs per household in the last quarter century has paralleled the ascendance of office work, investment in information technologies, and the salaried white-collar worker. The correlation may not be accidental. In fact, it is a clue to a related puzzle: How could our longer hours at work go unnoticed by economists and statisticians?

Quite simply, the Commerce Department's surveying techniques still reflect the bias of our industrial past when a blue-collar majority was paid by the hour. Government surveys undercount the number of hours worked by salaried workers because corporate accountants don't track, or report to the government, or compensate, the time actually worked by their salaried workers after hours, on weekends, while commuting, or on vacation. This is to say noth-

Dimitri Loukakos

ing of work performed at home, where, according to a survey in 2000, at least 25% of us plug back into work. As one observer recently noted, "hundreds of millions of hours of work are going unrecorded by the government."[2]

The government's rationale for using dated methodology is a mystery. Blue-collar laborers are a minority (about 15%) of the workforce while white collar workers (approaching 50% of the workforce) will soon constitute a majority.[3] The mystery functions as both farce and figleaf: the 33-hour workweek reported for white collar workers, a figure that lumps full and part time employees, is ill-reckoned and misleading. And the rosy productivity increases since late 1995 are inflated.

The government and most U.S. economists ignore surveys that more reliably and plausibly track the average workweek and, consequently, productivity. The ILO survey confirmed that Americans are working longer—much longer—than they did before the dawn of the information economy — a full 9 weeks more than the average European worker. And recent years have seen Americans extend their unenviable lead, a trend that parallels rising workplace investment in Silicon Valley technology.

U.S. workers are also less productive than their highly unionized, better compensated, and less harried counterparts in Europe. The ILO report found productivity significantly higher and increasing more rapidly—by over 50%—in Germany and France than in the U.S.

As it is, the biased U.S. productivity figures suggest that information technology has not only failed to reduce time at work, but also has failed to help us work more efficiently. Nearly 80 percent of all business investment in computer technology occurs in three industries: business services; finance, insurance, and real estate; and wholesale and retail trade. Official productivity growth has lagged in all these industries for years—in commercial banking, which is forever expanding and updating its computer capabilities, productivity growth was negative between 1995 and 1998.

Deepening the correlation between inefficiency and computer use is the fact that "knowledge workers," those working most closely with computers, are among those working the most hours of any group in the workforce.

Do we, as some have suggested, find the faster pace of work thrilling?[4] Are the long hours working closely with technology really so rewarding?[5] Has the workplace become a haven for those whose lives are uprooted by divorce and chaos at home?[6] Perhaps. But these explanations presume that overwork—whether overtime or more jobs per household—is voluntary.

Last year a *Business Week*-Harris Poll confirmed that most people feel they haven't benefitted from their increased workloads or the surging economy of the 1990s. Two-thirds of the respondents said the boom had not raised the level of their earnings or increased their job security.[7] For many, prosperity was illusory or literally borrowed: during the 1990s, household-related debt ballooned. Credit card debt alone surpassed $7,000 per household. And for the first time since the Great Depression, the household savings rate is negative.

Indeed, the payoff for our increasing toil has been so meager that it now takes two or more jobs per household to acquire necessities and luxuries that one job purchased 30 years ago. Today, in nearly four out of five couples—compared with one out of five in 1950—both partners work, with women working nearly as many hours for pay as men. Some work longer and harder because they want to. But for most, overwork is not elective, it is part of a new social contract. Renewing that contract in perpetuity is the household inflation that, like salaried overwork, eludes official surveys. Squeezed for time as well as income, multi-job households pay a monthly premium for childcare, a second or third car, dining out (or getting take-out) more often, and more.

THE GOOD FIGHT

Ayn Rand is harder to kill than Rasputin. (Nixon was a crib death next to her, a quitter.)

by klipschutz

In gross and subtle ways, statisticians and economists who should—and perhaps do—know otherwise obscure this unfolding social history as well as its connection to our era's version of "mechanization." Their confusion is ours: inaccurate tidings of higher productivity and shorter hours at the workplace sustain our naivete about technological efficiency.

Our confusion about work and time is far from academic. It invites us to deny the personal impacts of overwork.

* * *

What happens when pressure to work longer and harder constrains non-work life? When lunch breaks are shorter, less convivial, or simply an excuse to slip in more work? When fast food isn't deemed fast enough, so we "drive thru," take out, and dine alone, en route, as tens of millions of Americans now do everyday?

What becomes of imagination when we entertain, read, vacation, play, sleep (and, in consequence, dream) less? What happens to personal life when, as time-managment authors now advise, we schedule weekend "appointments" to garden, to have brunch or "romance," or to meet with family to review the "domestic agenda"?

What happens to work itself when, to get more done, we go at several tasks simultaneously?

Are we simply too busy to entertain such queries? If the answer is yes, we may be ignoring the most far-reaching change in American culture in over 100 years.

We once placed a high value on time away from work. The American-led movement for the eight-hour day, begun in the 19th Century and continuing through the 20th, is a leading candidate for the world's most sustained and violent

POETRY DEMANDS

THE INTRODUCTION OF PROGRESSIVE UNEMPLOYMENT
THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE MECHANIZATION OF EVERY FIELD OF ACTIVITY.
ONLY BY

UNEMPLOYMENT

DOES IT BECOME POSSIBLE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL TO ACHIEVE CERTAINTY
AS TO THE TRUTH OF LIFE
& FINALLY BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO EXPERIENCE;
FURTHER,
THE IMMEDIATE ABOLITION OF PROPERTY
& THE COMMUNAL FEEDING OF ALL,
THE ERECTION OF CITIES OF LIGHT, WILDNESS & 150,000 CIRCUSES
FOR THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE PROLETARIAT.

First printed by the Central Committee of the Dadaist Revolutionary Council of Berlin in 1919

class struggle. By mid-century, Americans were winning. At the start of the 21st century, we seem resigned to losing it.

It is now likely that most Americans will continue to experience less and less free, spontaneous time; fewer and fewer interludes undistracted, unthreatened or not overshadowed by work. What we are losing is not only a margin of time but also a conception of time itself and with it, a certain composure as well as a shared memory of another way of living.

Hastening and supplanting these losses is a preoccupying and work-centered stress.

Stress, so oft-cited we may by now be skeptical of it, is perhaps the most deeply and widely felt experience of our time, and not merely at the workplace where close to a majority now report it at debilitating rates. We occasionally hear or read that stress and related injuries cost American business billions of dollars in absenteeism and lost revenues. In less measureable ways, workplace stress touches nearly everyone daily.

Work-centered stress entangles lives. It weighs on the American preconscious, prompting harried choices, whether it be how and where we work (in our kitchens, driving a car), what we eat (fast, unhealthful), or what we do with our shrinking free time (watch more television, sleep less). Stress keeps us awake at night, makes standing in growing lines less endurable, sours the moods we bring home, ignites in road rage.

Stress may be the most honest response because it so immediately confirms our common predicament. We expected less work and more time. Indeed, contemporary medical practicioners now define the most affecting stress as the tension between the expectation of being more productive at work and the humbling reality of what technology has actually accomplished for us. What it has accomplished is unprecedented.

For the first time in history, work now commands an instant purchase on our time. An array of devices—cell phones, pagers, personal digital assistants, and laptops—provide an odd convenience. They give us the immediate, mobile communication we feel we need to negotiate life in the fast lane. They confer, for some, a sense of importance, of being "in demand." Yet it all somehow gets back to work: the same devices also serve as a Digital Leash, allowing work to tug at personal life anytime, anywhere. A growing attachment to work forces many to schedule non-work time as if we were on-the-job time — obliging us to work, commute, and even relax within a time-managed framework that was once the domain of hard-charging corporate executives.

A work-like regimen has invaded every refuge. The assault is visually confirmed by the "calendar tools" that millions of us now run on computers or carry in personal devices. Unlike the "DayTimers" and assorted appointment books of even 10 years ago, today's digital calendars overlay hour-by-hour grids over weekends and holidays, inviting us to track free time from a workaday perspective. There is justification for this, especially in the multi-job household. All too often, our weekends, holidays, and vacations con-

front us as time to complete postponed chores. Again our expectations—this time for play and recuperation—are diminished by a work-like outlook. The stress that MacLeish's contemporaries associated with paid work has come home.

In the Industrial Age, laboratories in Detroit, Buffalo and Menlo Park, New Jersey gave American capitalism the labor-saving technologies to mechanize the blue-collar workplace. More recently, the technology firms in Palo Alto and Redmond were to deliver time-saving automation. It has been over two decades and we are still waiting, even as we witness an investment in "faster, smarter" technology that now exceeds $1 trillion per year. And our most frequently heard commentators repeat the catechism—that information technology, while disruptive to society, has generated prosperity for all while reducing work or ameliorating its conditions.

Something quite different is occurring. Instead of automation, Silicon Valley has given us computerization, which has delivered *more* work, a cavalcade of unsteady jobs and uncertain tools, a mobile and instantly interruptible workplace, and less time to get anything done. *Information technology firms have persuaded us to computerize the workplace instead of automating it.*

* * *

Those who predicted the miracle of automation based on faster and faster computers misjudged the odd and frankly unexpected economics of technology innovation that evolved in Silicon Valley.

Expecting automation, and fearful of rivals, corporations opened their gates to information technology. They hoped to ride the trajectory of improving gadgetry to a new economy of higher profits and less compensated work time. Moore's Law and the rehabilitation of one of MacLeish's peers seemed to favor this course.

In the 1930s, the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter emigrated to an influential post teaching economics at Harvard University. This secured a platform for his most famous concept, "creative destruction." Schumpeter celebrated entrepreneurial innovation as the engine of progress in capitalist economies. (Later he came to think that a technocracy of scientists and engineers would institutionalize innovation.) He believed that markets would control the process of technological change in a way that would spread benefits widely, thereby compensating for the dislocation and obsolescence left in its wake. Schumpeter's star rose over Silicon Valley in the 1990s. Many insist that his views remain in sync with the disruptive innovation of our era, and they point to Moore's Law as proof.

Moore's Law is the famous dictum (advanced by Intel co-founder Gordon Moore) that microchip capacity—and, by implication, computing power — doubles every 18 months. This phenomenon was observed time and again throughout the 1990s. Citing it, and spinning it into corollaries, many economists and most business journalists *assumed* that faster, more efficient computer hardware was creating a Schumpeter turbo-effect: a non-stop boost in workplace efficiency that would yield higher profits, productivity, and prosperity.

What Schumpeter could not have imagined, and what many businesses are just now learning, is this: Work confronts Silicon Valley as a vast, ongoing market for technology products; it is immensely more profitable for Silicon Valley to computerize, rather than to automate, our work.

We took automation for granted. At industrial expositions and in magazine features in the 1930s and 1940s, automation became a way to entertain the future. But its shape—and the idea of the computer as its agency — really emerged in the 1950s and 1960s.

In a 1958 World Book Encyclopedia entry, John Diebold (a professional "management engineer") put the matter plainly. "Like mechanization," Diebold said, "the word automation ... is used to describe an attitude toward production." He continued:

> "Just as the machinery of mechanization freed human workers from much of the physical labor of production, the machinery of automation frees human workers from ... mental labor..."

Diebold suggested that computers were already reducing the "mental labor" of "business offices." But the consensus then forming around computer-driven automation overlooked the social history that could make it possible.

Fifty years ago, having won mandatory overtime pay and the right to strike, the labor movement could penalize employers who "mechanized" in ways that created more work or less pay. By contrast, at the dawn of the computer revolution, white-collar workers were unorganized. And a growing proportion of them—those on salaries—could extend "free" overtime to their employers. On the one hand, this meant that the economic incentive to automate office work was less compelling than it was to mechanize industrial work. On the other, the truly epic profits to be made selling computer technology assured that an irresistible force would hit every office. The result, computerization, describes the now familiar pattern of nonstop, disruptive investment in digital technology. It is a momentous force for change but, lacking an agenda to truly automate work, an insidious, cynical, and dehumanizing one.

For Silicon Valley, however, computerization is its own reward. The more frequently products ship, the larger the revenue—from sales as well as from rising stock equity. The faster that innovative technologies get pushed out the door, the higher the likelihood of achieving a corner on the market and a provisional monopoly profit, not to mention a major equity bounce. With the eager cooperation of Wall Street, Silicon Valley is driven to develop, devour, replace, and extend our digital infrastructure with reckless frequen-

cy. The outcome is a quickly changing proprietary computing environment that is at odds with labor-saving automation.

The logic of computerization is simple, effective, and self-reinforcing. It invites and, eventually, compels workplaces to discard still useful technology in favor of new products. It does so almost as frequently as Silicon Valley develops the next upgrade, which is now as often as every three months for widely used operating systems and applications.

The computer industry and its trade press are occasionally candid about the overwork wrought by computerization. In a special issue devoted to "IT Complexity" in April, 2001, *InformationWeek* observed that:

> "More than a half-century has passed since the invention of the Eniac computer and two decades since the introduction of the PC. Yet today's IT systems—in the home, the office, and the factory alike—are fraught with complexity and difficulty. Companies spend millions of dollars for help-desk support and troubleshooting technicians to untangle problems as PCs freeze, servers crash, Web sites go down, and networks fail."

The magazine reported that 90 % of the 250 IT and business managers it surveyed say "IT is more complex to manage than ever before." That same month, reacting to what a *New York Times* reporter called "an explosion in the variety of electronic devices," IBM's top hardware strategist Irving Wladawsky-Berger suggested that IT's complexity may soon be exponentially worse. "Our customers will have roughly 10 to 20 times more technology to manage over the next five years," he conceded. "This is a very tough problem" he argued, because computers today already must "survive much more unpredictable environments than in the past."

As workplaces have become dependent on information technology, our digital tools and environments have become obsolete at a faster and faster pace. As businesses get wired and interconnected, upgrading an application here or integrating a new database there introduces incompatibilities that roil (and prompt sudden upgrades to) other workplace computing environments. For Silicon Valley firms, it is a virtuous cycle.

But for business in general, the manic pace of technology has foiled efforts to truly automate white-collar work. Workplace routines are chronically revised to reflect digital retrofitting, application software tweaking, database porting, or the uncertain and seemingly endless project of conjoining disparate computer environments in the aftermath of corporate mergers. For a growing number of us, day-to-day work is less standardized and steady than at any time in living memory. Of course, standardization is not always kind to work and worker. It is, however, a premise of automation and the possibility of reducing toil.

Chris Carlsson

* * *

Chief among the casualties of computerization is computer literacy. Far from the static category still promoted by policymakers and business leaders, computer literacy is a changling. It presumes continuous training to match the twists and turns of the latest upgrade, training that, for most, is rarely forthcoming and timely. It also demands time, effort and patience to appropriate the arcane, informal knowledge that even seasoned programmers affirm is required to function in computer environments. Computer literacy has become a moving target with which few can keep pace. "You can never master your job because things change so often," as a 12-year veteran of a large Silicon Valley firm put it. Instead, we are slouching en masse toward a perpetual state of occupational apprenticeship.

Compounding the impact of upgrade cycles on the workplace is the astounding lack of reliability of computer software. The uncertainty of chronic, unpredictable change is trumped by the unreliability of tools that resemble prototypes more than products.

Never before have so many tools with so many defects been sold to so many workplaces. Technology firms, in their rush to the market, overlook product quality, scale back

testing, and routinely ship mischievous software full of "known bugs." Once a source of pride for American capitalism, workplace tools and technologies have reached historic lows in quality—and, of course, longevity: just as tools get patched and systems fixed, fresh upgrades are issued and a new round of wired alchemy engulfs the workplace.

Taken together, rapid technological obsolescence and defective software are leading causes of overwork in the white collar workplace. Those of us who work with computers now have a second job: keeping them patched and upgraded and responding to their intricate cues, messages and glitches. "Each user, an administrator," lamented the chief network officer of Sun Microsystems.

Given the fragile, complex, and changing state of information technology, it's not surprising that corporations can neither understand nor control their workplace computer environments. This has called into being a vast and lucrative computer support industry. In deals that would have shocked Henry Ford, blue-chip corporations now cede control of their most prized assets to strangers, signing multi-billion dollar contracts to outsource the managment of their computer systems. Among the beneficiaries is Electronic Data Systems, the computer support provider that made Ross Perot's fortune. EDS signed contracts worth $7.5 billion in the first three months of 2001, its ninth consecutive quarter of record signings.

Scandalously, technology development firms have taken a cue from the computer support industry. Patching the bugs in the software they shipped last quarter—and perhaps introducing a few more in the bargain — technology developers derive a growing portion of their revenues from "customer support," which typically costs $90 to $150 per hour ad hoc.

Wired businesses are over a barrel. Managers may threaten to switch operating system, application, or hardware vendors when new releases don't work as promised. Some do switch. But the threats more often give way to sighs. They know that similar problems will crop up in any new configuration.

"They can't rip it out," was how one technology marketing professional shrewdly described the leverage of the technology firm over its computer-dependent clients. Writ large, that leverage, and the extent of unreliability that now characterizes computer environments, is reflected in a single sobering datum. The computer service industries are now the fastest growing branch in the entire economy, with projected job growth topping the charts at 1,872% between 1998 and 2008.

* * *

We have come a long way from the relative workplace stability that characterized the high productivity years of the Industrial Era. Standardization, reliability and equilibrium were the rough premises of the Taylorist efficiency engineer who sought to impose a calculus of toil on blue-collar work. As computerization has laid siege to the office, work itself has been reorganized more often than at any other time in history. Today the very concept of "work routine" is an oxymoron. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Tower of Babel that is contemporary management theory.

In the 1980s and 1990s, management theory eagerly ratified computers as a means to reduce work and lower corporate spending. Today there is a tone of concession and resignation. Management consultants have given up on the optimistic "reengineering" of the early 1990s. (They rarely use the other "r" word—"restructuring"—because it has become a euphemism for layoffs and bankruptcy.) In the new millenium, they instead have recourse to chaos theory, improvisational theater, and neo-Darwinian models to depict their subject: the anarchy of the computerized workplace. Far from articulating a way to subordinate technology to work and thereby promote automation, management consultants prescribe coping strategies for the afflicted.

"[I]n the face of threat" from technological change, the

THE TIME FAMINE
for R. Dennis Hayes

Like the bellies of famine children, who
sitting dully on fissured earth have
nothing but time and almost no time at all,
our days have distended,

and like those children
we hunger surrounded by overflowing
prices as swiftly digital as rice,
as memoryless and purposeful as water

but not like, because we've forgotten
we're waiting for the glinting grain of life
or the dark meal of sleep, that we
agreed to wait, not like them because

our waiting is busy as the flies round their eyes,
crowded with quick articulate workings,
with appetite's mouth-parts
ticking, with a muffled buzz like instinct;

so that hunger in us is not
implosive emptiness but implanted
growth, a larva lengthening segments
under the swollen curve of our lives:

coiled like a mainspring, eyeless
but gleaming with intent, it eats
precisely, muscle-mass, nerve, then on
to the vitals one at a time; it cleans us

to slumped sacs awash in
screenlight, hung in feeder tubes; and having
reserved the will's red fist for last, slips out
of our open mouths and moves on.

—Adam Cornford

authors of *Surfing the Edge of Chaos* warily counsel managers to accept "living on the edge of chaos," because "[t]his condition evokes higher levels of mutation and experimentation, and *fresh new solutions are more likely to be found*."(emphasis added)

"E-business environments are full of surprises," a distinguished Harvard Business Administration professor concedes in her new book, *e-Volve!* After interviewing over 300 movers and shakers, and conducting a 785-company global survey, her advice to workplace managers? "Instead of following a script, e-savvy companies run an improvisation theater. ...[s]oon the performances of many troupes accumulate to take the organization in a new direction."

The metaphors of instability and the temporizing "solutions" reflect a workplace undergoing relentless change with no discernible direction other than the certainty of absorbing an endless stream of computer products. "If things seem under control, you're just not going fast enough." quipped management guru Thomas Peters. Indeed it's hard to escape the conclusion that the computerized workplace is, from the point of view of its underlying technology, unmanageable.

A metaphor that gets us closer to how computerization affects work and worker is that of the machine itself. "Wherever the machine process extends, it sets the pace for the workmen, great and small," observed Thorstein Veblen in 1904. Amid the chaos of an earlier machine age, and clearly speaking of different kinds of machines, Veblen warned that:

> ...Mechanically speaking, the machine is not his to do with as his fancy may suggest. His place is to take thought of the machine and its work in terms given him by the process that is going forward...."[8]

Today, Veblen would be among the first to agree that the most profound and wide-reaching "process that is going forward" is computerization. His suggestion that the machine influences the process as well as the "thought" of work bears comparing.

Computers are simple work machines. They are designed to work on several tasks simultaneously (multitasking) and to respond as quickly as possible—ideally, in "real time"—to interruptions that change the priority of assigned work, or introduce more work. This is as good a description as any of the approach to work that computerization has foisted on millions of white-collar workers.

Is it really so surprising that, absent the will to subordinate computers (and those who develop them) to the task of *reducing* work, we have reacted to the flood of technology products by adapting work to the task of computerization? With the pace and organization of work now parsed by clock cycles and paused by upgrades and in thrall to the latest digital status quo, no wonder we are behaving in computer-like ways.

* * *

At our jobs and in our personal lives, we are interrupted and interruptible as at no other time in history. This condition derives from the computer-like assumption that we are available to respond in real time to requests for our attention. More than occasionally we put aside assigned work to administer our computers — installing or testing or integrating new software, adding a print driver, reading a reference manual, downloading a bug fix, or waiting for technical support while a system or application is down. When our computers are functioning, we are even more interruptible.

According to a 1998 Pitney Bowes survey the average office employee sent or received 190 messages (faxes, traditional letters, telephone calls, and email) everyday. In 1999, that figure grew. Nearly half of those surveyed reported being interrupted by six or more messages every hour. One of four people reported being distracted to very distracted by the interruptions. As a technology support administrator told me, "I'm lucky if I get 20 minutes of work done without a distraction."

The window of our interruptibility may soon open wider. Technology firms are currently prototyping "Online Presence Awareness" systems that integrate Instant Messaging technolo-

Matt Hoover

gy into "device-aware" networks. Widespread corporate deployment would make it easier to find and interrupt employees wherever they are: at a computer desktop in a cubicle, at a laptop in a home office, or using a cell phone, pager, or wireless PDA anywhere. And the invasive cues of Instant Messaging are harder to ignore than incoming email.

To get an increasing volume of work done, we mimic another computer-like behavior: multitasking. The average Windows desktop user has at least three applications running simultaneously, and many more in the background. Programmers, financial services professionals, and others already have two or more monitors to accommodate the number of tasks they track or work on simultaneoulsy. Computer support administrators routinely talk on the phone, chat via Instant Messaging, compose or check email, and glance at two, three, or more windows on their monitors, all approximately at the same time. Some of us claim to be managing it. Others aspire to do so. What can be said is that, in a perverse way, multitasking is well suited to the interruptible work environment. But what does it bode?

Concluding that "the number of tasks to which people are simultaneously applying themselves is multiplying like some mutant breed of postmodern rabbit," a *New York Times* reporter elicited the following testimonial from a database design businessman:

'You can't be as focused...you feel like you're always trying to conceal the amount of tasks you're juggling. It does create a real anxiety, and it's hard sometimes to even put your finger on what it is. It's knowing I can't ever be done or shut things out."

In the 1970s we called this "multiphasic behavior." It was diagnosed as a pathological compulsion to do many things at once. Today a Microsoft spokesperson calls it "continuous partial attention." It is conceded, accepted, even lauded as part of the new way to work, even though it likely increases the time needed to get work done and, for want of focus, invites mistakes that require rework.

Multitasking grounds the widespread perception that we are working faster and working more. When multitasking, we really are trying to do more work in the same amount of time.

Computerization extends beyond the traffic in artificial obsolescence. It is a new and disruptive force that has put workers in an impossible situation. With a variety of software, hardware and computer networks evolving at warp-speed, we are surrounded by less than reliable, not quite compatible tools and unpredictable computer environments as performance expectations rise, deadlines shorten and interruptions mount. Computerization is a script for stress, overtime—and multitasking.

Silicon Valley is unlikely to relent. It has an abiding interest in selling new products as quickly as possible to the largest number of workplaces. Indulged by policy and opinion makers, computerization has become our national creed. It is, however, vulnerable.

Computerization has introduced a fugitive economics — a status quo that is officially characterized as prosperous and productive but that is ultimately neither. Is is an act that may prove difficult to sustain. To many, the new economy is no longer comprehensible.

We are in need of a new economics that speaks to our social history. We might begin by insisting on a reckoning of our unrecorded overtime and a recalculation of the work time and productivity figures. The revised figures would make it more difficult to justify computerization in its current, anti-automation manifestation. They might also prompt demands to renounce the salaried worker's exemption from mandatory overtime laws.

In the meantime, computerization propels the fabled cycle of creative destruction. The destruction unfolds at ungovernable rates, and the new arrives without the rewards and efficiencies Schumpeter projected. A recession is already slowing the cycle, but it will take more to challenge the perceived supremacy of computerization. It may take more people working even longer and more frantically. MacLeish and our grandparents would have recognized this for what, among other things, it surely is: the speed-up and overwork of a crude machine age. Will we?

The Digital Leash may have no visible wires, but it is real. We must learn to see it before we can cast it off.

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Less Money . . . More Change!

More World . . . Less Bank!

TALE OF TOIL

THE FILING CABINET IS ON FIRE

by Clayton Peacock

Last year, while packing up a damaged Macintosh G3 Powerbook for repair, I took a call on the company cell phone reserved for support issues. It was our CFO, calling from thirty thousand feet. In the background I could hear a stewardess taking drink orders.

"I just spilled juice on my Thinkpad," he mumbled.

"Was it powered on when you spilled?"

"Yes."

It was fried.

"What happened?" I asked.

"The screen turned all sorts of colors. Now there's this awful smell."

In my four years of technical support, I've seen only a handful of laptops sustain a hot spill without total data loss. I told this to our CFO.

"I understand," he said generously. "So long as I still have my email."

I waved away the colleague I'd been helping when I took the call, shoved the receiver into the crook of my neck, and began a speech I find myself giving about twice a week. Email messages and attachments, I explain, are downloaded from the company's mail server to an employee's own machine. This means all email records, such as sent mail and saved correspondence, are stored on the local computer. If the hard-drive on that computer is unreadable, the email is too.

I wait for my cue.

"I thought you backed everything up."

I continue my spiel. We can't back up two hundred machines each night, because of storage requirements, licensing costs, and logistical problems, such as backing up laptops that aren't here. Consequently, company policy is that employees are responsible for their own backups. I refer to the backup policy and step-by-step instructions posted on our internal website. I stop talking.

This fiction that email is forever — recoverable so long as someone knows what they're doing — is half the reason people like me have a job. The other half is breaking the news. It doesn't matter how many times I warn an employee that their data is in a permanent state of peril—90% of them won't back it up. Even if a worker loses a year's worth of email in a disk crash, habits rarely change for more than a few weeks. When they drop their laptop six months later and the disk fails to boot, they become, once again, the blindsided victim.

The problem is much larger than crashed disks. There are plenty of creative ways to lose your data in the digital office. Some of the nastier ones are damaged resource forks (on Macs); unreadable file allocation tables (on PCs); or locking yourself out of the BIOS. The most common, however, is the most psychologically damaging: the corrupt mailbox. This is a phenomenon whereby the more email one saves, the more likely the folders storing that email will fail. It is like saying the more paper you stuff into a filing cabinet, the more likely that cabinet will burst into flames.

In a company of just under 150 employees, I see about three filing cabinets burst into flames per week. Typically the employees leave me a quavery voicemail, then hang up and hunt me down. I've learned to spot them as they speed-walk through the cubicles, heads spinning in a periscopic panic. When they find me they are pleasant, feigning control.

"You're probably busy, but..."

I stare at pupils the size of disk platters.

If there is any hope to be found in the accelerating binge-and-purge cycles of information, it is in these epiphanies following catastrophic loss, when one is most receptive to radical reassessments of the meaning of work.

"My email won't open." The women often put their hand on my arm.

"I'll drop by your cube and take a look," I say. "Just give me a few minutes."

They don't move. "I can't lose my email."

Before I've reached their workspace, they've repeated this half a dozen times, seeming to recite it as much for their sake as my own. By 'I can't lose my email,' they don't just mean "I can't lose my client folders and to-do lists." They also mean letters to family and friends, flirtations with lovers at other jobs, address books, calendars entries, personal memos—in short, the ongoing record of a parallel social life most employees carry on during work hours.

Zoe Noe

This is hardly because workers are slacking off. The expansion of the work sphere into private lives has made socializing while on the job the only way to keep the personal life stirring. Support workers like myself are typically "on call" after work hours, getting interrupted by the obscene rattle of the Nokia cell phone at every conceivable hour because another employee, also working longer than they should, has run into technical difficulties. I've lost count of the number of routine, work-related email threads that begin on a Saturday afternoon, and

by Sunday morning have elicited replies from all half-dozen people on the distribution list. Is this because the employees just happened to be checking personal email on a Saturday night? Or is it because of a perception that work, made ever harder to leave behind with the advent of email and cell phones, never really ends?

Whatever the answer, for many of us in the so-called new economy, a good portion of our private life has shifted to the eminently fragile, work-defined locus of the laptop computer. Despite the daily hauling of the workstation between home and office, despite the scattered files on the desktop with names like "Carla's Chemistry Homework," few of us seem to recognize just how heavily we've come to rely on the machine to manage our private affairs until the inevitable catastrophe occurs. The employee whose computer won't boot is spooked by something much larger and more emotionally charged than the possibility of losing company assets.

I ask the obvious question.

"No." They look stunned. "How do I do that again?"

I give them the second half of my spiel. They fidget. They put their hands on their forehead. They ask about Norton Utilities.

I pop the yellow CD into the drive. I don't tell them that Norton is probably the most overrated software on the market. Instead I lean over to make sure they see the splash screen showing Peter Norton, his armpit on the vents of a monitor gun. Somehow he's a comforting figure.

After Norton is through with its quackery, I take the laptop back to the tech area, where now and then I manage to resurrect an OS without losing the file system, or to rebuild a mailbox without zapping the index. More commonly I waste the morning booting from floppies and running command-line diagnostics. To the victim hovering outside my cube, I call out the increasingly discouraging results. If they ask about professional recovery services—which most workers seem to know about, despite their learned helplessness—I explain that the cost of such remedies is extortionate (as in a couple grand for a single disk) and there's no guarantee of getting the data you need, especially after liquid damage. They nod gloomily. I continue booting from floppies. At a certain point, usually just before lunch, I break the news.

If I've done my job well, the victim is prepared for the worst. Over the course of the morning

Hugh D'Andrade

But what about *my E-MAIL!?!?*

they've learned that plenty of other employees, including their illustrious CFO, have suffered similar accidents, some involving cocktails at thirty thousand feet. I've shared with them evidence of corrupt files and bad sectors and invalid resource forks. I've reassured them that they aren't to blame, even if I determine they dropped the machine. I am employed, in the end, to treat concussive data loss as a basic fact of business. I am the service technician of amnesia.

A guy from sales asks if he should be worried about a new virus. He tells me it's called "HELP WITH PSYCHOTHERAPY," and is supposed to delete sensitive data from a hard-drive, beginning with family email. I explain that such hoaxes have been flying around the Internet ever since Norton Anti-Virus hit the market. He laughs, getting my joke.

I do not tell him that any morning he may hit the power on his Superslim Sony Vaio, a line of laptops which seem to last about six months between critical disk failures, and find himself staring at a DOS screen flashing his data's last words: "OS Not Found."

Employees are as complicit in this fiction as the support staff. No one gets fired for disk failure. So most people conveniently forget just how vulnerable their data is, allowing the false sense of security encouraged by onsite technical support to trump our precautionary counsel. When the inevitable occurs, when Outlook hangs on launch, when a disk grinds and stops spinning, we are the authorized targets of their stages of grief: denial, blame, bargaining, resignation.

Recently I've been tending to an epidemic of sudden death syndrome among Macintosh G3 Powerbooks, traceable to a faulty internal power adapter. On a Sunday morning not so long ago, I awoke to the crying of the Nokia cell at 7:00 AM. The caller, one of our star employees, follows the etiquette of these intrusions by first apologizing for phoning me at home. I've become quite cynical about these apologies. The very availability of an after-hours support line means that most workers, when faced with a glitch they can't solve, will place the call anyway. Half the time the problem is intertwined with some personal conflict on their computer, like a botched installation of Tomb Raider for their kid. I am polite but curt during these calls. While I make a reasonable effort to help, there is nothing I am concentrating on more intently than a way to gracefully hang up.

This time, given the caller's rank, I can't do that. He tells me he's unable to turn on his Powerbook. Still in bed, I walk him through some diagnostics to determine if it's another faulty power adapter. I explain how to remove the battery, how to manipulate a paper clip to reach the reset button on the rear of the machine, how to manually discharge the capacitors. After several such tests, I have my answer.

"It's dead," I say sleepily.

"So what am I supposed to do?"

I tell him he'll need to ship the Powerbook to the main office, so I can remove the hard disk, transfer the data to a spare machine, ship that new powerbook back to him, and return the malfunctioning computer to the Apple Repair Center. I add that it will be about 72 hours before he has a working Powerbook in his hands.

"That's impossible," he says. "I'm on deadline."

I offer to ship the spare powerbook to him first thing Monday morning. The caveat is that I won't be able to transfer any data to the machine before shipping it out.

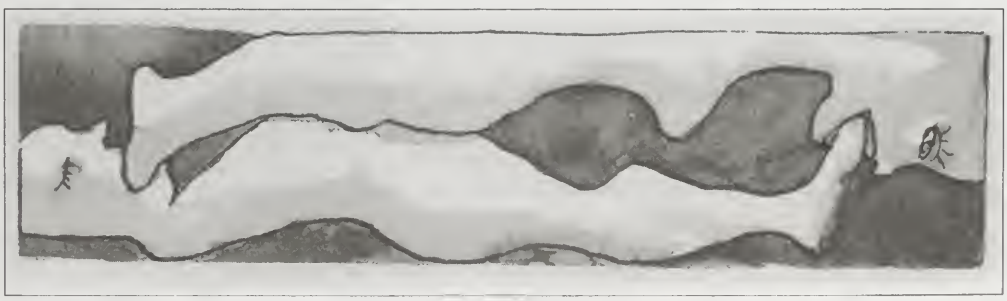
I wait for my cue.

"Will I still have my email?"

I continue.

"Look," he interrupts me, sputtering. "I'll tell you what I want. I don't care if I get a Powerbook, a Toshiba, a Radio Shack special—I don't care. At this point all I want is a computer that works—one that doesn't break down every fucking month."

It's a reasonable request, however unreasonably it may be phrased, and one I hear frequently in the negotiation stage of data grief. But I can't promise anything of the kind. Computers are only getting tetchier, thanks to the insane cramming of parts into the shrinking laptop shell, and to the progressively buggier operating systems that control them. There isn't a portable computer on the market that doesn't have, well, issues. Toshibas have problems with hardware profiles, something that has woken me up dozens of times when employees accidentally boot into an offline configuration. Macintosh Powerbooks, despite their name, ship with the most unreliable power-management chips on the planet. The less expensive iBooks ship with a hard disk Fisher-Price would be ashamed of. IBM's 560 line of Thinkpads, thanks to a "flexible" design, conk out after a few months of "flexing" the motherboard beneath the keyboard, eroding the circuitry and causing spontaneous reboots, usually in the middle of typing, until the machine can't make it past the Windows splash screen without restarting in an infinite boot loop. Toshiba Portèges suffer aneurysms at a system level if improperly lifted from the docking station. The list goes on. Thus to furnish a laptop "that doesn't break down every fucking month" is fucking impossible. I say as much to the



Minna Eloranta

Powerbook victim.

"You mean every laptop is going to break?" he asks.

I say, well, yes.

"That's lousy. That's really fucking lousy." Still groggy, I can't tell if he's directing this at me or the computer industry at large. The truth is somewhere in between. To most employees I am the closest thing they know to an actual representative of the computer industry. As such, I become a lightning rod for their disillusionment with technology. Once this anger passes, and an employee is back to banging on a laptop, the rage of these exchanges is forgotten. I return to my spurious role as computer fixer, and the employee to their faith in the machine. It is a mutual deception, on which the business keeps going, my rent paid, my days filled. So why should I kick against the goad?

A former executive was in the habit of leaving his Powerbook at work over weekends, locked on his desk but visible to anyone walking by. One Friday night his cubicle neighbors hosted a pre-weekend drinking party, with sugary cocktails offered to all. A partygoer left an unfinished beverage on top of the officer's corner cube. Over the next 48 hours the mixture ate through the paper cup, dribbling lollipop cocktail all over his machine. By the time he showed up on Monday, the cocktail had seeped through his keyboard and into the metal casing of his hard disk. The Powerbook spun loudly a few times, sputtered, and died within thirty seconds of taking power.

He was initially determined to retrieve his "mission-critical" spreadsheets and subscription records from the disk. I recited the usual warning about liquid spills being especially destructive to data, but went ahead to obtain quotes from specialists in hardware triage. No one would even look at the disk for less than a couple hundred bucks. Assuming the data could be recovered—for which there was no guarantee—the consensus estimate was a couple of grand. The executive finally decided, like so many before him, that the information, on second thought, wasn't so critical after all. "I feel quite Zen about it," he said. A few months later, he quit.

If there is any hope to be found in the accelerating binge-and-purge cycles of information, it is in these epiphanies following catastrophic loss, when one is most receptive to radical reassessments of the meaning of work. It's hard not to feel betrayed by the mixed message of the new economy—information is simultaneously indispensable and disposable—when your entire workspace explodes and everyone's reaction is, "Hey, it happens." Even still, without the cathode-ray reflection of your email routine, you are more likely to notice the crumbs on the keyboard, accrued over a year of taking lunch indoors; or the flicker of the fluorescent lights, now unbearably obscene; or the streaming of the afternoon sun. Are you really working, if your workspace has disappeared? If not, are you therefore *not working*? And if you're *not working* and no one seems to notice, why not leave the building altogether and go do something useful ... or fun?

Mona Caron

Intellectual Property: The Attack on Public Access to Culture

by Howard Besser

Under the guise of a response to the digital age, the corporate "content industry" has targeted our basic right to free speech, including satire and social commentary. The insidious vehicle: copyright law. In 1996 in *Wired*, law professor Pam Samuelson assailed the "copyright grab" by publishers, motion picture studios, music distributors, among others. Since that time, the industry has become more aggressive about strengthening protection for copyright holders and weakening public rights.

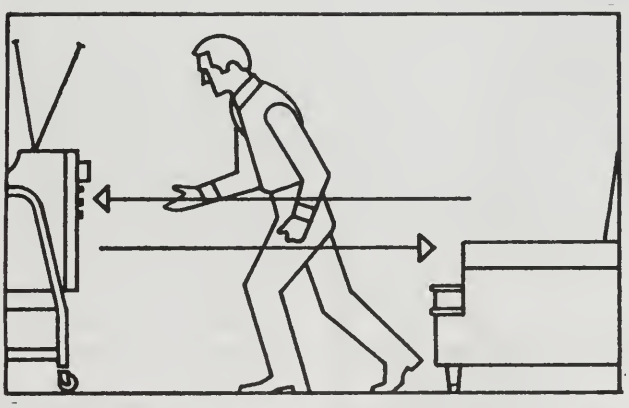
Many holders of copyright view it as an "economic right." US copyright law, however, was actually established to promote the "public good" by encouraging the production and distribution of content. Article 1, Section 8 of the US Constitution states:

> The Congress shall have power ...to provide for the ... general welfare of the United States *To promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries;* [emphasis added]

The rationale behind copyright is that granting creators temporary monopoly rights over their creations will encourage them to create more. The real goal is to ensure that new knowledge will be developed and circulated.

Underpinning much of the recent rhetoric by the "content industry" is a view of copyright as an unlimited economic right. This logic is misguided. The economic rights granted by copyright are merely a byproduct of attempts to fulfill the societal need to increase creativity. Though it granted Congress the power to give creators monopoly control over their creations, the Constitution was careful to insert the phrase "for limited times."

Prior to the digital age a delicate balance had emerged between copyright holders and the general public. Copyright holders had certain exclusive rights over their material, but those rights were tempered by access rights held by the public. The three most important public rights were the public domain, fair use and first sale.



Jess Rowland

Copyright has always been a temporary monopoly. When a copyright expires, the work enters the public domain, a diverse unregulated public space. Anyone can draw on material in the public domain for any purpose whatsoever. Unlike material under copyright, no one can charge for using the public domain or prevent the use of such work. A rich public domain has allowed creativity to flourish. Because *Romeo and Juliet* is in the public domain, we have a wide variety of creative interpretations—from a version set in contemporary Mexico to *West Side Story*—all without having to get permission from a copyright holder. The public domain is a critical public space, an essential part of both education and creativity.

Fair Use, a common practice codified into law in the 1976 Copyright Act, limits a copyright holder's monopoly over the use of his/her work by permitting copying under a limited set of circumstances for uses such as education, private study and satire. The fair use doctrine assumes circumstances that constitute a compelling enough social good that even if a copyright holder wants to prevent them, the law will not support it. Fair use allows students to photocopy copyrighted articles for personal use, teachers to read excerpts from copyrighted works in class, reviewers to quote from copyrighted works in their published reviews, and satirists to incorporate portions of copyrighted works.

It also permits repurposing and recontextualization for parody or social comment. Re-using something for a purpose other than its original intention is a fundamental part of creativity. Kids play-act in clothes made for grown-ups, they use tin cans for telephones, and they create collages from magazine photos and articles. Creative adults constantly repurpose content in a wide variety of social commentary situations (from rap music sampling, to collage illustrations, to postmodern art). The elimination of fair use would not only hurt education and social welfare, but could stifle the very creativity and content production that copyright was intended to foster.

The First Sale doctrine limits a rights holder's control over a copy of a work

to the first time that copy is sold. According to first sale, anyone who purchases a work can then do what they want with that copy—resell, lend, share, or destroy it—without ever consulting the rights holder. Among other social benefits, this doctrine has permitted libraries, used bookstores, and used record stores to operate without having to consult with a rights holder each time they lend or sell a work.

Attempts to eliminate the first sale doctrine in the digital age raise even more critical issues. A key aspect of first sale has prevented the rights holder of intellectual property from completely controlling access to it and how it is used. Though an off-line publisher, newspaper or Hollywood studio might limit the audience for an initial set of sales, someone buying the work could turn around and sell it to anyone else. In proposed digital age legislation, however, the purchaser of a work could not legally sell it or give it away without permission. In a world without first sale:

- publishers could refuse to distribute to unfriendly critics
- organizations could prevent gadflies or consumer groups from viewing documents that might be used to paint them in unflattering terms
- authors could prevent known satirists from getting copies of their works
- libraries would not be able to lend works

The proposed elimination of fair use and first sale for digital material will gut much of copyright's ability to promote the public interest, turning it into a vehicle that guarantees economic rights to copyright holders.

Taken together, public domain and fair use have allowed satire and social commentary to flourish. Without them, copyright holders could not only charge for the reuse of material, but could also limit creative use not to the holder's liking. A recent example of this occurred in Spring, 2001. The estate of Margaret Mitchell was able to temporarily block the publication of a satire of the sexism and racism in *Gone with the Wind* by claiming that the satire (*The Wind Done Gone*) infringed on their copyrighted story and characters. A higher court eventually allowed book's publication, but as the content industry becomes more successful at changing the laws, look for more suits like this one.

Primitivo Morales

How the Digital Age is Different

The content industry fears that fair use and first sale in the digital age will cause them to lose significant control over their copyrighted content, threatening their profits. Because a digital work is so easy to copy, many rights holders fear that fair use provides a loophole for those who wish to redistribute a work. They also fear that first sale will permit their first buyer to redistribute a work for free, ruining the rights holder's market and destroying authorship incentives. The content industry is pressing for legislation which would virtually eliminate fair use and first sale in the digital world.

There are at least two key problems with the content industry's position: (1) in the past they have raised the specter of massive financial loss due to copying, yet history has proven their fears groundless; and (2) even if the content industry faces loss of control in the digital age, their proposed legal changes will result in an immense loss for the public, and tip the delicate balance of copyright law firmly to the side of the industry.

When home video recorders were introduced in the U.S. in 1975, the content industry feared massive copyright infringement. In 1976 key members of the content industry (Walt Disney Productions and Universal City Studios) filed suit requesting an injunction against the manufacture and marketing of Betamax videorecorders. They contended that these machines would cause them significant financial harm in that individuals could use them for copying protected intellectual property. A landmark 1984 U.S. Supreme Court decision (*Sony Corporation of America et al. v. Universal City Studios, Inc. et al.*) recognized home videorecording as a fair use, and allowed Sony to continue marketing the machines.

In the course of litigation, representatives of the content industry strongly supported the Universal/Disney position. Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, called the Betamax a "parasitical" device. He claimed that VCRs posed significant threats to the film industry's markets:

- because cable television subscribers could record off the air and lend recordings to friends, very few people would subscribe, and cable TV would dry up
- because people could tape off the air then fast-forward through commercials, TV advertising revenues would tumble

- if people could tape movies off the air and watch them at home for free, they would stop going to movie theaters, and the studios would face financial hardship

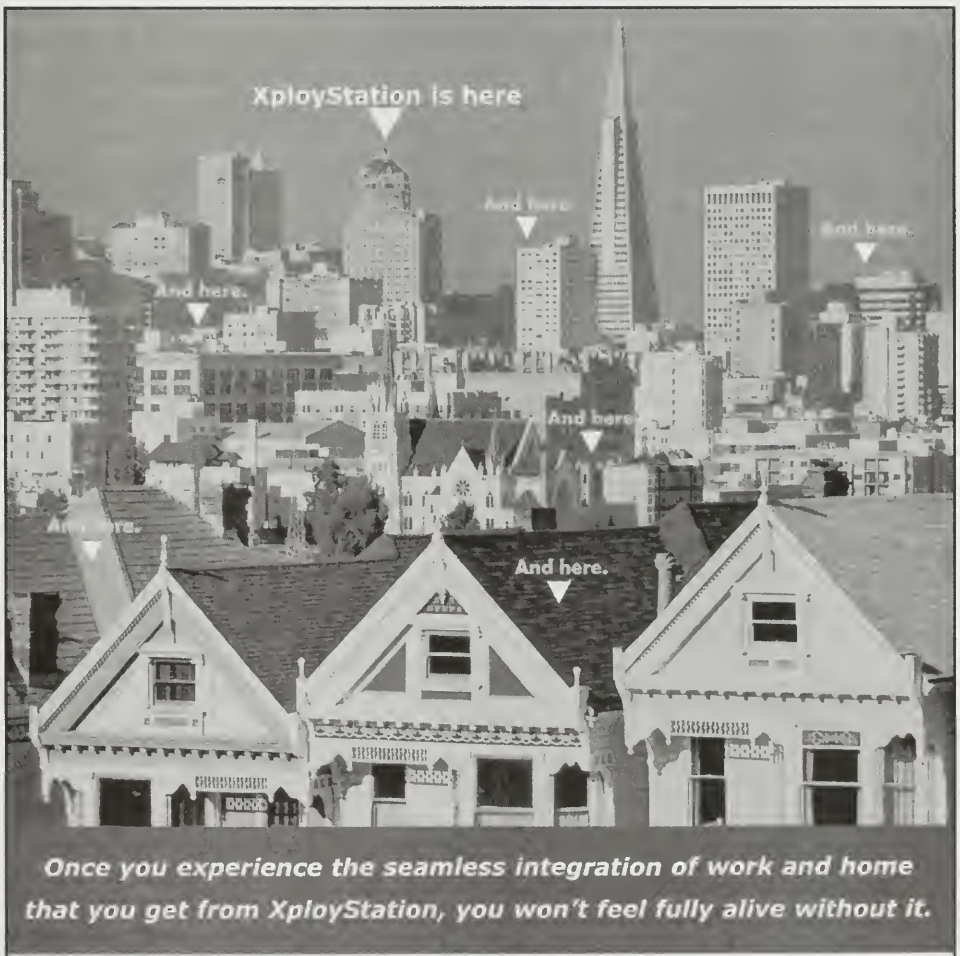
None of these dire predictions have come true: the cable television industry is financially healthy, television advertising revenues haven't tumbled, and movie theaters still attract a healthy business. Ironically, the studios that tried to prevent the use of home video recorders now make almost half their income from rentals and sales to the home video market.

In the past four years, legislators re-shaping intellectual property law have heard vociferous testimony from the content industry about looming tremendous losses unless copyright laws are tightened. Most of the proposed legislation has responded directly to these fears in ways that will effectively eliminate fair use and first sale in the digital age. Public interest coalitions (including libraries, educational institutions and consumer groups) have countered that new legislation should preserve the kind of balance between rights holders and the public interest that existed with analog material.

What Has Copyright Become?

The framers of the US Constitution envisioned intellectual property law as guaranteeing a set of temporary monopoly rights to individuals — "authors and inventors"—to encourage the production of new works. Economic changes have created the current situation in which creators have not had the resources or means to disseminate their creations. Today most creators have little choice but to sell their copyright to corporations who then disseminate these works. For the most part, copyrights are not held by individuals, but by corporate entities. The content industry would argue that strengthening their position allows them to provide greater incentives to individual creators, but many creators challenge that notion (National Writers Union president Jonathan Tasini just won a suit against the *New York Times* on behalf of freelance writers.) Strengthening copyright laws bolsters the position of the content industry by giving it an untempered monopoly over content, at the expense of the public good. It does little to encourage the creation of new content.

Proposed legislation to turn copyright laws into economic guarantees for the holders is but the most recent attempt by the content industry to tilt the balance in their favor. If content providers have their way, intellectual property use will move away from domains that have at least some provision for public good and social benefit (e.g. as fair use and first sale)—into arenas where only economic relationships apply.



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Limited Time

The "limited time" duration of copyright guaranteed that works would enter the public domain relatively quickly. This provision was instrumental in ensuring that the law promoted the creation of new works, rather than the extraction of profits from content. The duration of a copyright guarantee has increased over time. A 1709 British law set copyright for 14 years. Prior to 1976, copyright was granted for 28 years and renewable for another 28 years. The 1976 Copyright Act increased the term to 75 years, and the 1998 Sonny Bono Term Extension Act increased it still further—to 95 years for corporations and 70 years after death for individuals.

Intense lobbying and public relations efforts by the content industry reveals a desire to see the public domain completely eliminated. In fact, provisions within the 1998 Digital Millenium Copyright Act took works that had fallen into the public domain and put them back under copyright. The two companion 1998 copyright acts placed a wide variety of materials that should be entering the public domain back under copyright control for at least another 20 years (which gives the content industry ample time to extend copyright again). Songs like Irving Berlin's *Blue Skies,* Harry Woods' *When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob Bobbin' Along*, and Hammerstein and Kern's *Ol' Man River* and *Showboat* should all enter the public domain next year, as should stories by Virginia Woolf, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ben Hecht, Rudyard Kipling, P. G. Wodehouse, and Zane Grey. All of the above have been placed under copyright control for at least another 20 years.

OUT OF SEASON TO TASTE

Those little scooters are everywhere
like anti-SUVs

or computers (just add legs and hair)
or upbeat franchisees

Hooters opens up the street
Have faith, it closes too

Sidewalk scooters too will pass,
all at once, as if on cue

Only the computers keep coming on
When fingers grow from them, we're done

by klipschutz

Some content industry promoters defend their encroachments on the public domain by claiming that the new economic models of the digital age will eliminate the need for a public domain. They contend that maintaining copyright in perpetuity allows them to create "micro-payment" delivery systems, thus allowing anyone to access older content for just a few pennies per use. However, copyright is as much about control as it is about access. Under the system being proposed rights holders will be able to prevent uses not in their own interest. Following their logic would turn the public domain into a controlled pseudo-public space where information is clearly a commodity to be bought and sold.

This lengthening of copyright duration flies in the face of the Constitution, which, as noted, granted Congress the right to institute copyright protections for *limited times*. A robust public domain of copyright-free material allows creators to draw on and incorporate history into new works. It is absurd to think of 75 or 95 years as a "limited time," and even more absurd to rationalize that exclusive rights lasting beyond one's lifetime would provide incentives to a creator to create more works.

In a 1998 editorial, the *New York Times* (itself a major content-holder that benefits from strong copyright legislation) sharply criticized the extensions of copyright duration that have since become law.

> "Supporters of this bill, mainly the film industry, music publishers and heirs who already enjoy copyright revenues, argue that extending copyright will improve the balance of trade, compensate for lengthening life spans and make American protections consonant with European practice. But no matter how the supporters of this bill frame their arguments, they have only one thing in mind: continuing to profit from copyright by changing the agreement under which it was obtained.
>
> There is no justification for extending the copyright term. Senator Orin Hatch argues that the purpose of copyright is "spurring creativity and protecting authors." That is correct, and the current limits do just that. The proposed extension edges toward perpetual patrimony for the descendants, blood or corporate, of creative artists. That is decidedly not the purpose of copyright.
>
> Copyright protects an author by granting him the right to profit from his own work. But copyright also protects the public interest by insuring that one day the right to use any work will return to the public. When Senator Hatch laments that George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" will soon "fall into the public domain," he makes the public domain sound like a dark abyss where songs go, never to be heard again. In fact, when a work enters the public domain it means the public can afford to use it freely, to give it new currency.
>
> . . . [T]he works in the public domain, which means nearly every work of any kind produced before the early 1920's, are an essential part of every artist's sustenance, of every person's sustenance. So far Congress has heard no representatives of the public domain. It has apparently forgotten that its own members are meant to be those representatives."
>
> (*NY Times*, Feb. 21, 1998 editorial)

Lengthening of copyright duration is particularly onerous in view of other attempts to assert copyright over material either already in the public domain or about to enter it. Corbis Corporation (a digital image stockhouse wholely owned by Bill Gates) contends that when it digitizes an image of an art work or photograph, the digitization creates a new copyright, to persist for the duration of copyright protection beginning with the date of digitization. If this contention is upheld by the courts, the digital version of works already in

the public domain will remain under copyright protection for an additional 95 years.

Recently defeated legislation would apply copyright to an entire database, and start the copyright duration clock ticking every time a new item is added to the database. This would allow a database provider a perpetual copyright merely by adding something new to the database every 90 years! This legislation died in Congress, but will be reintroduced with strong backing from the content industry.

The content industry was one of the leading supporters of Clinton's first campaign for the presidency. Clinton appointed former copyright industry lobbyist Bruce Lehman as Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, where he managed efforts to overhaul the nation's intellectual property laws. Lehman was the driving force behind the administration's green paper and white paper recommendations on major changes to those laws.

As copyright legislation advanced through Congress, content industry lobbyists aggressively courted congresspeople. The Association of American Publishers (AAP) hired former congresswoman Pat Shroeder to head their organization. In the 1996 election, the content industry donated over $11 million to congressional campaigns, split fairly evenly between Democrats and Republicans. In the early part of the 1998 campaign (as copyright legislation was under debate in Congress), Hollywood- connected donors gave more than $1.3 million to congressional campaigns. The content industry also waged a strong public relations campaign, claiming the economy would suffer irreparable harm if copyright controls were not tightened. After the Digital Millenium Copyright Act and the Sonny Bono Term Extension Act finally passed into law, a wire service story revealed Disney's aggressive lobbying (particularly as to portions which extended copyright protection for an additional 20 years). Hardly surprising, as Disney's copyright over characters such as Mickey Mouse, Goofy, and Donald Duck was due to expire. Equally unsurprising, a week after the Digital Millenium Copyright Act became law, Bruce Lehman resigned his Administration post, having accomplished most of his goals on behalf of the content industry.

Hugh D'Andrade

Licensing

For the past decade, most publishers have refused to sell material in digital form to libraries. Instead, they require libraries to license this material. Licenses are contractual arrangements, and publishers claim that rights such as fair use do not apply to these arrangements. This has put publishers on a collision course with librarians. AAP president Pat Shroeder regards librarians as the enemy. According to a Feb. 7, 2001 article in the *Washington Post*, she complained, "Publishers want to charge people to read material; librarians want to give it away."

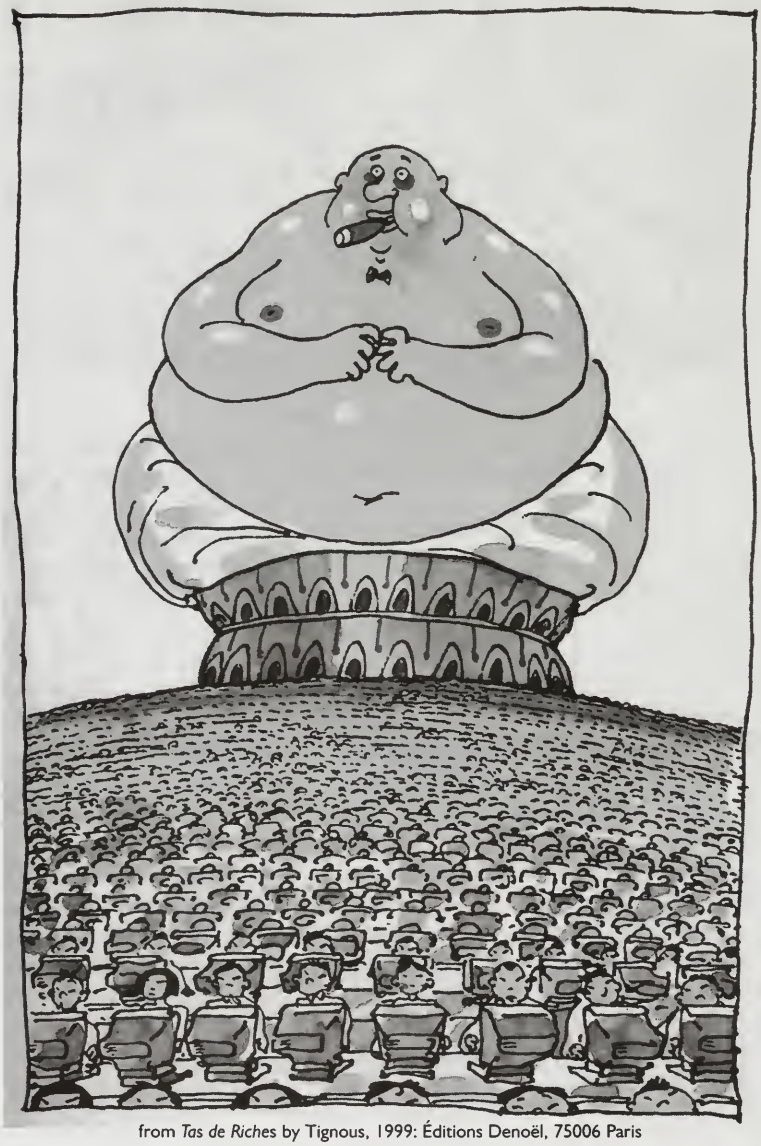
Under licensing schemes, material is leased rather than bought outright. This raises a myriad of concerns for libraries. Licenses are for a fixed period of time at the end of which license fees may be raised drastically. If the market isn't large enough, the material may be withdrawn from the market. The licensor may eliminate particular items for economic reasons or because they are controversial, making it difficult for a library to build collections or maintain a historical record.

Site licenses of digital works of art to educational institutions can cause particular problems for teachers and students who build curricular or creative materials that incorporate these works. They are hesitant to spend the time to create new materials incorporating licensed digital images absent some assurance that the campus license (and each individual image that was originally part of it) will contin-

ue in perpetuity, and that they can take their creations with them when they leave the campus. Sabbaticals at another campus, faculty or students taking positions elsewhere, or even showing a portfolio to a potential employer would all be prohibited by most licensing agreements.

Licensing material in digital form can also raise privacy concerns. A trend in university licensing of digital material is for members of the institution to access such material directly from a central site maintained by the publisher, rather than from a local site mounted by the university. This type of architecture requires that each individual be identified to the publisher as a valid member of the licensed university community. Such an approach carries the potential for dangerous violations of the privacy that university researchers have come to expect. Libraries carefully guard circulation information, and many purposely destroy all but aggregate statistics to avoid having to respond to law enforcement agencies seeking an individual's reading habits. It is extremely unlikely that publishers will provide this kind of privacy protection. Many websites monitor the browsing at their site, tracking who is looking at what, how often and for how long. A whole industry has emerged that purchases this kind of personal marketing information from site managers and resells it. In lean financial times, even licensors who are committed to privacy concerns may find the temptation of payment for this kind of information difficult to resist.

Another key concern for libraries is the way in which licensing digital information will affect interlibrary loans (ILL). Due to consolidation in the publication industry, academic journal subscription costs have skyrocketed. The only way libraries have been able to respond is by developing cooperative purchasing agreements with other nearby libraries. But most licensing agreements for journals in electronic form prohibit ILL or any other form of access outside the immediate user community. Licensing has the potential of not only destroying libraries' recent response to the rising cost, but may also destroy their historic cooperative lending practices. Traditionally, even the poorest library could employ ILL to borrow materials it could not afford to purchase. This practice is likely to be prohibited by digital age licensing agreements.



from *Tas de Riches* by Tignous, 1999: Éditions Denoël, 75006 Paris

Free Speech Suppressed with Intellectual Property Law

The increasing use of licensing schemes to avoid domains (like fair use) where the public good must be taken into consideration is part of a larger trend whereby commercial transactions establish precedence over public rights.

Libel laws have been used recently to try to suppress criticisms traditionally protected by free speech. These lawsuits, filed by corporate entities against individuals, have laid the burden of proof upon the defendants, forcing them to prove all their criticisms were true. In 1998, Oprah Winfrey successfully (and at great cost) defended herself against a $12 million lawsuit filed by the cattle industry under a recent food disparagement law. According to a *NewYork Times* wire service article, "critics say that [the recent food disparagement laws] are a serious infringement on free-speech protections and are driven by business interests intent on silencing journalists and others who question the safety of the

American food supply." In a similar case in Britain, McDonalds sued activists from London Greenpeace over a leaflet urging consumers to boycott McDonalds for a host of reasons ranging from health to working conditions to the effects of cattle raising practices on tropical rainforests. In this long-running "McLibel" case, the defendants were forced to prove each of the accusations in their leaflet.

Many groups use the threat of intellectual property infringement litigation to avoid criticism or suppress works. Limitations to the fair use defense against copyright infringement can result in the elimination of parody and satire, the curtailment of free speech, and the suppression of creativity. Below are a few recent cases (many more are available in the online longer version of this article at (http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/~howard/Copyright).

- In 2000, Mattel sued artist Tom Forsythe claiming that his satiric photographs of Barbie dolls violated their copyright and trademarks. Forsythe had sold postcards of his photographs with the dolls posed performing household chores and in sexual positions, obviously commenting on the role of Barbie in perpetuating gender stereotypes. In February, 2001 a federal Appeals Court ruled that Forsythe had not violated Mattel's copyright or trademark.
- In the late 1960s, satirical cartoonist Dan O'Neill created a mouse which he used as a minor character in an underground comic book that satirized corporate America. Walt Disney Productions sued O'Neill and his publisher for copyright infringement. In a series of cases and appeals that nearly ruined O'Neill financially, the courts ruled that publication of a comic including the mouse was a violation of Disney's copyright (*Walt Disney Productions vs The Air Pirates*). The rulings in this case raise disturbing issues about copyright infringement being used to inhibit an artist from engaging in satire or parody of a cultural icon.
- In 1998, a French AIDS awareness advertising campaign withdrew two ads under threat of suit by Walt Disney Inc. One featured Snow White in suspenders and fishnet stockings and the other featured Cinderella in a seductive pose (Disney Pressure Halts French AIDS Ad Campaign). Disney contended that these ads constituted copyright infringement. The mere threat of litigation caused the AIDS awareness group to pull their ads. This incident is noteworthy both because it did not require actual litigation (a mere threat assured compliance) and because Snow White and Cinderella are not Disney creations, but are folklore characters going back hundreds of years.
- In 1991 Negativland released a single parodying disk jockey Casey Kasem and U-2's song "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." Almost immediately U2's distributor (Island Records) and publisher (Warner/Chappell) went to court charging copyright infringement. After only two weeks, all recordings were pulled from the shelves, and the recording has never made it back into music stores. Several years of litigation almost bankrupted Negativland's members. But the band, which had a history of cultural satire, continued to adamantly defend the social importance of artistic appropriation such as sampling.

  "Throughout our various mass media, we now find many artists who work by 'selecting' existing cultural material to collage with, to create with, and to comment upon... The psychology of art has always favored fragmentary 'theft' in a way that does not engender a 'loss' to the owner. Call this 'being influenced' if you want to sound legitimate." (Negativland, page 154)
- In fall, 1996, webmasters of fan sites for *Star Trek* began receiving letters from a Viacom/Paramount attorney charging copyright and trademark infringement. The letters demanded that all such material be removed immediately, including photographs, sound files, excerpts from books, and even "artistic renditions of *Star Trek* characters or other properties." A few months later it was revealed that Viacom/Paramount was planning its own *Star Trek* website, and had used the threat of litigation to remove competition. This litigation threat had an additional chilling effect on free speech: a request by the Star Trek Usenet Discussion group (rec.arts.sf.starwars) to create a new subgroup dedicated to fan fiction was vetoed because Paramount's litigation had claimed that fictional accounts using *Star Trek* characters or settings were violations of their intellectual property (see articles by Granick, Ward).
- In 1996, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) told the Girl Scouts that scout camps must start paying a licensing fee to sing any of the four million copyrighted songs it controlled, such as "Happy Birthday." Many camps went songless for months, until media attention generated outrage sufficient to forced ASCAP to back down. But in doing so, ASCAP still insisted that it might prosecute camps for playing background music without a license (as opposed to singing around a

IN CASE OF FIRE RUSH HEADLONG TO YOUR OWN DESTRUCTION

Jess Rowland

campfire). Though most citizens would bristle at ASCAP's attempts to charge the Girl Scouts, as a copyright holder the law is on its side. The Girl Scouts' only defense would be fair use (but only as long as fair use remains a defense).

These cases all occurred under previous versions of copyright law. More recent legislation which would further limit or eliminate fair use carries with it greater danger. The discourse over copyright legislation is dominated by discussion of "economic harm" to the content industry if action is not taken. The harm to the public good from further limitations on fair use is treated merely as a minor side-effect.

Conclusion

Together, the concepts of public domain, fair use and first sale form an Information Commons—a diverse public space for free speech and creativity. In recent years we have seen a powerful assault on this Commons—from bullying threats of litigation, to court cases, to harsh legislation. The content industry is not only trying to reshape copyright from a public good into an unlimited economic right, but is even trying to expand its control into new arenas in order to suppress criticism.

The content industry has complained vociferously about potential economic harm, yet its assertions seem to be specious: The Netherlands has a much more liberal policy than fair use, allowing individuals unlimited reproduction of copyrighted material for their own private use; and the content industry still operates profitably within the Netherlands. As the effects from the Betamax court case show, technological changes initially perceived as economically threatening can lead to the discovery of new economic models involving income streams that exceed the ones previously "threatened". And as the software industry has shown, lowering prices not only provides a great deterrence to copyright infringement, but can open up new markets of potential customers.

There has always been a distinct set of differences between information and commodities. (For example, if I sell or give someone a toy, I no longer have it; but if I sell or give them information I still retain it.) The law has recognized this difference by treating intellectual property differently than tangible property. As the law has eliminated various public good aspects of intellectual property, we have seen a rapid increase in the commodification of information. Intellectual property becomes more bland as it increasingly falls under corporate control. Individuals find it more difficult to become creators. Diverse voices are more and more marginalized. As Negativland wrote in the Epilogue to their book, "We are suggesting that our modern surrender of the age-old concept of shared culture to the exclusive interests of private owners has relegated our population to spectator status and transformed our culture into an economic commodity." (Negativland, p 190) We need to stop the fencing off of our Information Commons and seize it back as a public space.

Acknowledgements

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Chris Carlsson

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DISTANCED EDUCATION:
Fast Times at Ronald McDonald U.

By Jesse Drew

From the large land grant colleges of the Midwest to inner city colleges in urban centers, US educators, academics, philanthropists and activists have managed to lay the groundwork for a system of public higher education—democratic in its admissions and its aspirations. Though far from perfect, these universities stand as vital public spaces for the intermixing of ideas, classes, cultures, and lifestyles. As a faculty member in several public universities, I am saddened to see this valuable American resource in grave danger of being destroyed by a concerted campaign of absorption waged by multinational corporations and their cadre of complicit university professionals.

Nothing from the first 30 years of my life would have indicated that I would ever find myself standing at lecterns in the role of university professor. It is no exaggeration to say that, by now, thousands of students have passed a semester or two before me, perhaps raptly absorbing, hopefully mulling over, possibly even sleeping through my harangues on art and technology, computer techniques and applications, interface design and interactivity, art history, critical theory or documentary film—my words, video clips, computer demonstrations, overheads, and invocations hopefully penetrating their central nervous systems.

I am perhaps a most unlikely candidate for such an occupation, having left home at 15, a graduate of the ninth grade, spending the next decade on industrial assembly lines. In my mind, a professor was a comical and pathetic character. The Mad Professor. The Nutty Professor. Goodbye Mr. Chips. In my favorite childhood show, the stock character known as "The Professor" was senile, with long gray hair and walked around holding an enormous book, coke bottles soldered onto his glasses.

I detested most college students as well. I lived next door to students, who played loud obnoxious music late at night, when I would have to get up at 6AM for my shift at the factory or the construction site. Worse yet, on weekends, I would be confronted with them getting hefty student discounts at the movies, while me and my minimum wage friends paid full price.

But as an avid reader, I found myself at the University Library more and more, and wandering around the halls of an institution that allowed me to explore the realm of ideas, cloistered from the prevailing winds of outside reality. I became fascinated by Chinese History, and devoured dozens of books on the subject. Then I stumbled upon a large lecture class on contemporary Chinese history, and snuck in, soaking up the lectures, debates and discussions that raged around the auditorium. I relished experiencing people from many walks of life engaged in the exchange of ideas, an experience not often found within the daily routine of work and home. In a university setting, one could have conversations about politics, society, history and science, about things that mattered to me, rather than the usual banalities dictated by mass media, entertainment, sports, and star trivia. Thus, still working, yet somehow finding time for classes, I took my GED and eventually earned an AS in electronics, and then a BA in Art.

Involvement in both the electronics industry and the art world led to my being asked to teach a class in art and technology, back when the worlds of art and electronics were not fused together as they are today. Energized by the ability to teach, I got my MA and eventually my Ph.D. and began teaching for a living, in the high demand areas of multimedia, web design, digital video and all things *ars electronica*.

I soon found myself in the stressful position of teaching on five different campuses. Some semesters I was burdened with 30 hours a week "contact" time in the classroom, the equivalent of two or three fulltime faculty jobs. All this to make the equivalent pay of one tenure-track position. Though my evaluations were excellent, and my classes overloaded, there were no fulltime job openings. Equally distressing, most of my students only wanted to learn the short-term money-making skills, with no real interest in the aspects of technology that fascinated me—social aspects, elements of control, social justice implications, utopian or dystopian ramifications. Though the mission of a four-year university is supposedly broad-based knowledge, I often found myself being little more than a technical trainer for the burgeoning dotcom industry. The university actively promoted this view of itself, to attract student "customers." Ultimately, I found myself dealing with the grim reality that many of the subjects I taught were directly responsible for much of what I find reprehensible about the direction of higher education.

In my decade working in industrial manufacturing and assembly, I learned a fair amount about what a speedup is, and how a speedup impacts the working conditions and wages of industrial workers. Little did I know that as a university professor I would remain within the confines of the same industrial system. Today's university models itself on the modern multinational corporation. Microsoft. Walmart. McDonalds. Starbucks. These are the working models, not some old-fashioned Socratic notion about mentors and peers. Today's public university president sees himself as CEO, and gets paid like one. Deans of Colleges frequently act as corporate managers, more responsible for the bottom line

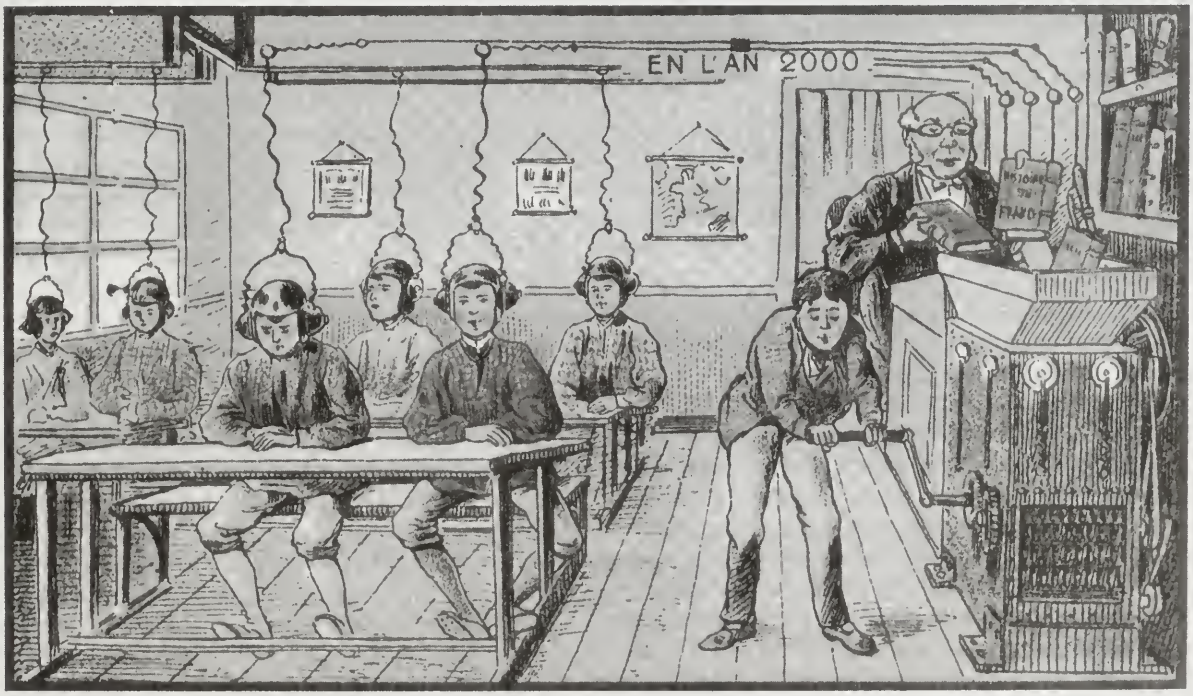
than the educational process. Today's chief university administrators rarely even come from educational backgrounds, but are hired for their financial acumen. They perceive the faculty as the workforce, the students as the customers. Following this corporate model, the McUniversity must fight for market share while slashing labor costs. And they do this the same way other multinationals operate—by relying heavily on temporary workers, imposing modern speedup technology, and weakening any unity and solidarity among its workers.

For decades, the industrial workforce has been decimated by the globalization of work processes, in particular the offshore factory. The nature of the educational "market" does not permit this directly, as students are local entities. However, moving the university "offshore" can be accomplished by moving the university into cyberspace. By digital duplication and dissemination, the educational "content" can be re-used, sent around the globe, and even sold for a profit. This has become the goal of today's McUniversity CEOs. The present discourse of university management is dominated by this idea—similar to the retail industry—of getting away from "brick and mortar," by moving into so-called on-line or distance education. Unfortunately, by using the progressive claim of modernity, evoking false empathy for working families, and releasing a barrage of high tech hype, they have been successful in neutralizing the natural opponents to their plan.

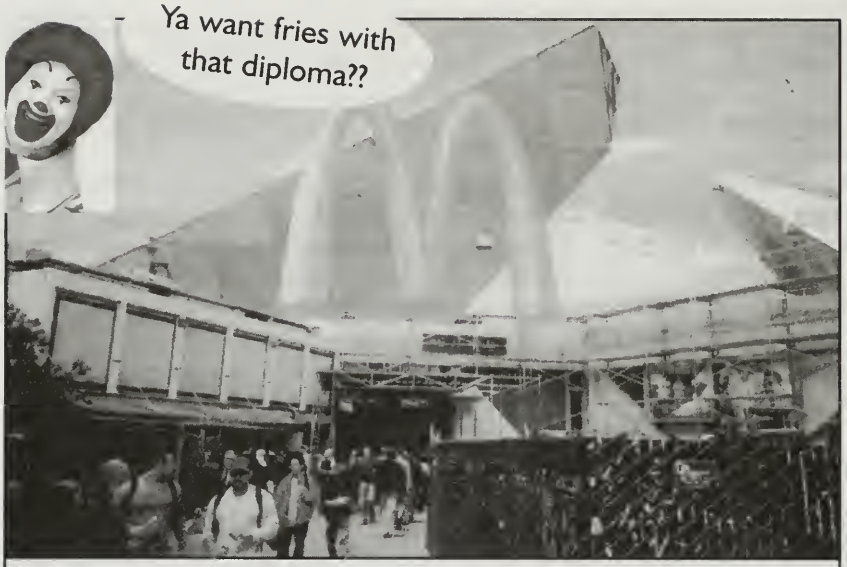
Why Johnny and Janey can surf the web but can't read or write

The argument for distanced education sounds very reasonable at first. Why make thousands of students converge onto one location, disrupting their lives, fighting traffic, getting dressed in the morning, when they can stay at home, log on, and work towards their degree? Stuffy lecture halls, crummy food, the tussling, shoving, sweaty crush of students, slurping their morning coffees. Who needs it? Stay at home, say the high tech proponents, and get a real education. By clicking icons on a screen students can watch canned or perhaps even live lectures delivered from afar. By e-mailing an anonymous teacher the results, they can interact with their cyber-mentors. They can even take tests on the Web and get their answers instantly e-mailed back to them.

A large part of the "new economy university" rests upon the technological savior which goes by the name of "virtual classroom," "distance education," "the on-line university" and other euphemisms forged in the chambers of university marketing departments. But for all the excitement raised from this so-called "revolution," a significant factor is glaringly absent—the students. None of these on-line experiments have any proven success in improving the educational process. But, like the once-skyrocketing stock of dotcom companies before they even turned a profit, the on-line bandwagon is now full of cheering, horn-tooting university professionals en route to the future, education be damned. Despite the absence of proven benefits, the transformation of the university, the dissolution of "brick and mortar," is considered "inevitable." What is inevitable, however, is that without a concerted opposition by faculty, students, and the public, higher education will cease to be an important public



School in the Year 2000, originally an 1899 cigarette card by Jean Marc Côté



Pardon Our Construction

We're Building the New Corporate University!

Learning to Swim where there's No Water!

To prepare you for the working world, here at Biz U. we're creating a uniquely temporary environment. Temp teachers, temp administrators and staffers, even temp students! After our environment of pervasive insecurity, you'll really learn how to thrive in the New Economy.

Distanced Education:

In today's busy world, who's got time for active learning, exposure to a diverse student body, or discussing ideas with others? Today's Biz U. is spending millions so you can receive canned educational products via TV or computer in the isolation of your home or cubicle! Critical thinking doesn't pay. Business needs programmers, not artists or philosophers!

Money for Prisons, not for Education:

Besides paying for the bloated salaries of our CEO administrators, we're putting your tax dollars where they're really needed—building jails! In today's market-driven social climate, prisons are simply a better economic investment. Why else do you think prison guards make so much more money than teachers?

Jesse Drew

venue for the exchange and incubation of ideas, but will be permanently subject to the forces of "the market."

Unlike most university administrators, as a student I've had two such experiences with on-line/distance technologies of instruction, both of which were considered abject failures by the students. Each class involved two dual classrooms, coexisting side by side, yet separated by hundreds of miles. Our classrooms existed as alternate universes, where the professors took turns delivering lectures to the classroom in which he was physically present, as well as casting his words off into the other on-line classroom. After the lectures, both classes could interact in front of a camera lens, controlled remotely by an appointed student in the class. The classes were accompanied by e-mail listserves as well as a web page component.

The novelty at first was pleasant. For the first half hour, people craned around the monitor to see what the other class looked like. Lots of laughter and merriment ensued over a few minor technical blunders, and the awkwardness of the situation. But when we tried to get down to a real discussion, it foundered. It was as if the two classrooms were tumblers in an hour glass, a lot of sand struggling to flow, but only one grain at a time could pass. Without physical presence, our convictions were filtered out. We could see and hear someone, but without context. Nuance and tone were blanched out. Side discussions in the rooms, often important to developing a context, could not be communicated. Conversation became burdensome and heavy. As a result, people's intentions were often interpreted wrongly. Friendly smiles were perceived as smirks, irony and sarcasm taken at face value.

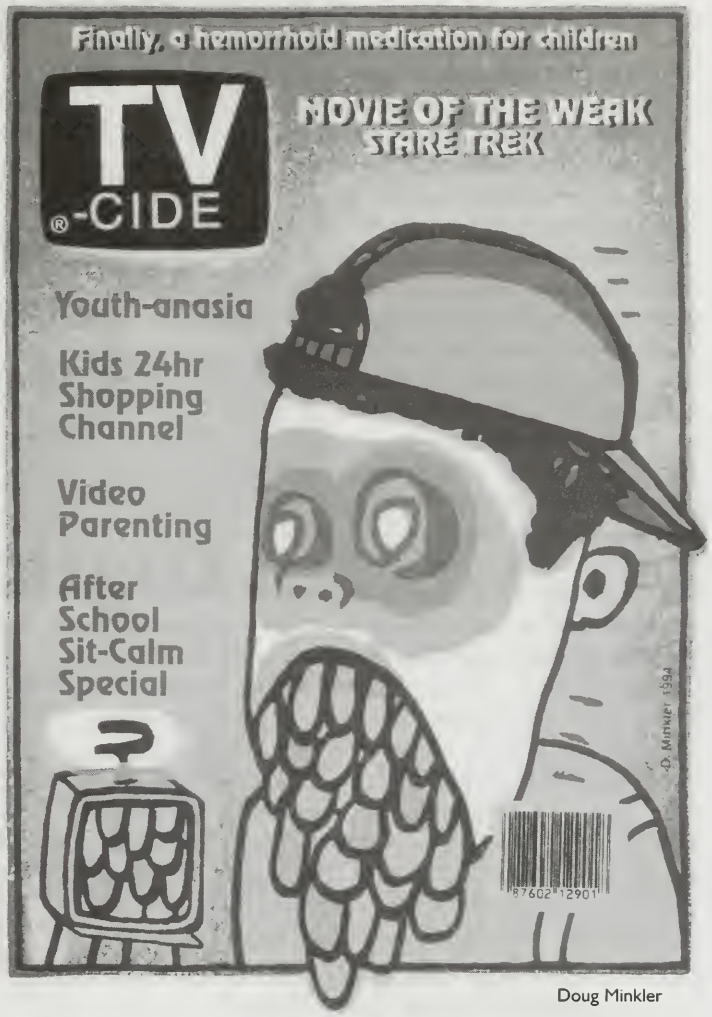
E-mail discussion lists coincided with the audio/visual experience. Usually the e-mail discussion at the end of the class was "Is that what you meant to say?" or "I don't think you really understood me." Towards the end of the class, myself and a fellow student traveled 500 miles to meet with classmates from the other class. We were amazed how often we had totally misread our fellow students.

One glaring example was when we queried our fellow students at a distance, most of whom were of Mexican origin, about their views on the recent Zapatista uprising in Mexico. We had a half-hour disjointed discussion, and we came away perplexed about their negative opinion as to the uprisin, which contradicted our understanding that Mexican young people broadly supported it. Later on, in e-mail discussion, we learned that in fact they all supported the Zapatistas. In fact, several of them had participated in mass demonstrations of support.

In the end the on-line element of the class proved

amusing, perhaps useful in very limited applications, but mostly a waste of time. These classes were not mere experiments, however, but pilot programs destined to replace the traditional classroom experience, and to eliminate a professor at either end of the delivery system.

These tele-distance classes were funded to the tune of millions of dollars by communications consortiums, in order to prove to the university that it was in their best interest to go online. The faculty member in charge of one of these classes was highly compensated by the telcom consortium. He went out of his way to slap a happy veneer on the results of his research, and to scorn his "dinosaur" colleagues who didn't come aboard the techno train. He pointedly advised students to give a good evaluation of our distance learning experience, so as not to appear ungracious or unthankful for the technology bestowed upon us. (The same consortium was vying to convince the state medical establishment that it could eliminate doctors in outlying areas also. Patients out in the boondocks would stand in front of a machine and get checked by doctors who wouldn't have to leave the comfort of their offices.)



Doug Minkler

The rich get educated, the poor get trained

The battle over who controls the university has its origins in the 1960s. The McUniversity serves what modern corporate America wants for its workforce, and educated students with a critical understanding of their role in the world is not on the menu. The money lost to the successful right-wing battle for the defunding of public higher education has now been replaced by widespread slavish begging for corporate money. Departments make deals with corporations that put them in good graces with their "sponsors." At one university I was informed that a tenure track faculty member was hired not because he was a good teacher, but because he came attached with a million dollar corporate grant. At a faculty meeting, the Dean said to a room of part-time temporary faculty that we must "learn to do fundraising" to keep our jobs. This from a guy making $148,000 a year. I regularly see broadcasting and technology-related departments making long-term procurement commitments to technology corporations, in a field where winners and losers often come and go in matter of months. Such deals hobble these departments with a single brand of technology for many years, eliminating their ability to objectively compare and contrast. And yet, they are commended by the administration and envied by the faculty. This emphasis on corporatization has resulted in a demoralizing of the faculty, and a death-blow to the concept of a real education. Pedagogy has been replaced by patronage.

Whatever pedagogical preconceptions professors may believe in are shunted aside in the implementation of the on-line university. The foundation of learning is no longer based upon an interactive learning experience, but is predicated upon what Freire refers to as the "banking" system of education—the students as empty receptacles to be filled through the spigot of digital channels of dissemination. To their discredit, many faculty members have surrendered their pedagogical concerns and moved to accept the McUniversity presuppositions. But, digital conversion comes with its own arrogant assumptions. Prime among them is that the teaching process is one-way, flowing from teacher to student. I beg to differ. Students often learn more from other students than from the teacher. And faculty also learn from students! Learning is a collective, interactive experience, which is precisely what an on-line environment does not permit.

In the banking concept of education, knowledge becomes a gift bestowed upon those who know nothing.

Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents him or herself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. Students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence—but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher.*

Jesse Drew

Digital Landfill

Last year's model = this year's scrap

The political ramifications of the distance university are enormous. Universities have always been a raucous, seething pool of political discontent, one of the last places with a truly public character, neither mall nor city hall. A gathering place of people from all walks of life; a fertile swamp of ideas, cultures, races. Asian Student Unions. Black Student Unions. Mecha. Gay Student Unions. Socialists. Communists. Religious Preachers. Bible Thumpers. Palestinians. Israelis. Hip-Hoppers. Jocks. Hippies. Punks. The whole gamut of the modern American scene. How tempting, then, to eliminate it all, funnel individuals through the glowing Netscape palette of the university portal. A sanitized, whitewashed, safe and clean mall of the mind. Sit back. Relax. Learn.

The Digital Divide, Same as the Old Divide

When Newt Gingrich came to power in the early 1990s, he suggested that giving poor people laptops would be the key to empowerment. Liberals scoffed. When Bill Clinton and his entourage took over, Gingrich's disparaged "let them eat laptops" campaign morphed into the "digital divide." In other words, give 'em laptops, or at least wire their schools so the computers will work. As someone who has trained hundreds on computers, I can attest that what students need is reading, writing, critical thinking and logic skills development. Without the skills to read manuals, troubleshoot technical problems, and use the computer in a productive manner, the wired classroom is doomed to failure.

Even more importantly, students need safe and secure home lives, a healthy environment and the peace of mind to nourish an active imagination. Without these prerequisites, computers are an absurdly expensive waste of time and resources. The rhetoric of the digital divide focuses on the purchase of hardware and software products, conveniently profitable for many multinational corporations while the real skills and resources that students need go begging. The digital divide is the same divide that has plagued industrial society from the beginning—the division of class. Without substantial structural change, no amount of computer products will tilt the balance in favor of the under-represented and under-served. The digital divide is a marketing scheme by an industry that sells products by taking advantage of America's sympathy for the disadvantaged, and laughs all the way to the bank.

And where is the opposition from the faculty? Unfortunately, many faculty members are blinded by a sense of "professionalism," a false consciousness that deceives them into thinking they are not "workers" in the true sense. Ironically this sense of professionalism does not come equipped with pay—prison guards, garbage collectors and other positions not requiring an advanced degree often have starting wages much higher than faculty members. But no matter, many professors believe they have more in common with their administrator/bosses than with their co-workers or the students they teach. As a temporary faculty member for many years, I have seen little sense of solidarity or action among them to connect with part-time, temporary adjunct professors.

The sense of superiority that tenured professors feel is enhanced by the fact that relatively few are given tenure. Unfortunately, the occasional tenure track job that comes up is rarely awarded to someone with a different point of view or to someone who might shine a little brighter than the other incumbent faculty. Tenure-track hiring has become a process ruled by the law of the least common denominator. It often functions as a well-designed mechanism for mediocrity.

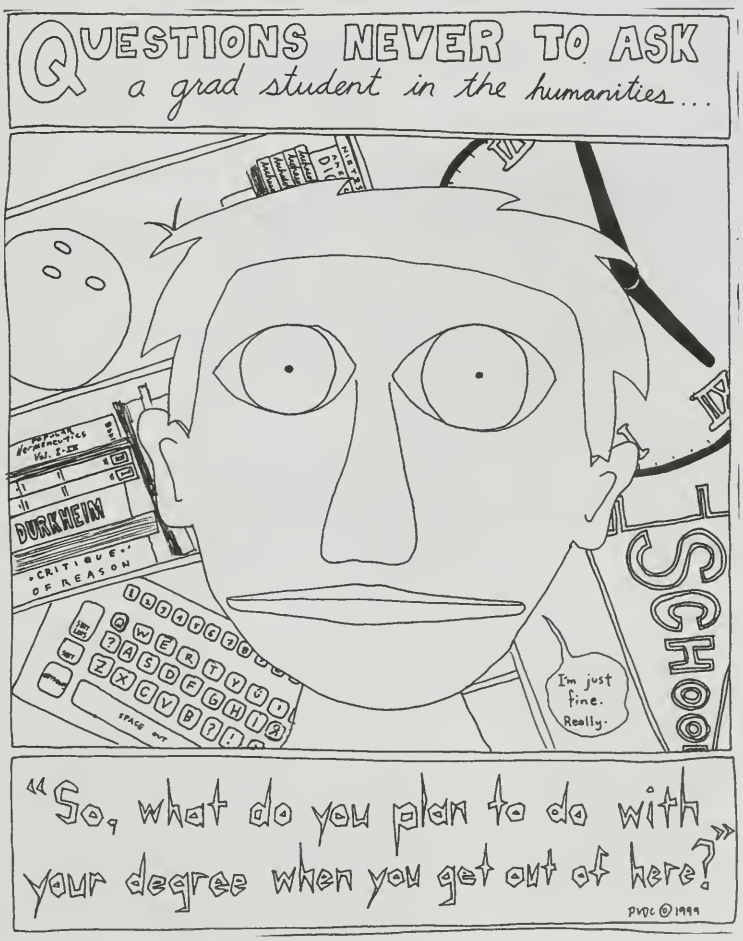
* Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* pp. 58-59

This does not bode well for coming battles with insurgent right wingers who would love to destroy the tenure system and burden the university professorial workforce even more. As a graduate student at a large university I helped lobby state congressmen for fee relief and got to sit in on a number of sessions at the state capital. It was the Republican congressmen who were the most friendly, relishing statistics that adjunct and temporary faculty not only taught the majority of the students, but had student ratings higher than most tenure track professors. For all of this, we earned much less than tenure track professors, usually with no benefits. We were seen as a potential pool of displacement labor, who could be used against the entrenched tenured. Many adjuncts *are* bitter at the lack of support shown by tenure track profs and *would* feel justified in replacing them. And with the university adopting the corporate model, tenure comes off looking more like an employment perk than the original basis of academic freedom. Detractors of tenure like to think of it as a way to hold onto deadwood. However, most good professors I know feel it wouldn't be the uninspired or tired professors getting the boot, but the "troublemaking" iconoclasts, the ones who snuck in under the radar. If the university is merely a training ground for corporate workers, who needs academic freedom anyway?

There are certainly many problems with the current state of higher education, many of which stem from lack of funding, a problem exacerbated by assaults on public school education. But any examination of the crisis needs to go beyond the surface, to a radical restructuring of higher education. The public university should be an *autonomous* public space for developing the ideas we require to move humanity forward. It should not be a mere training grounds to support the short-term marketing considerations of corporate America. One of the saddest things I witness is brilliant students getting siphoned off to build websites for some worthless commercial venture.

Real education encourages independent and critical thinking, and provides the intellectual skills necessary to negotiate through a lifetime of difficult choices. We should cultivate an education as we would cultivate a garden. An intellectual garden is diverse and well-tended, with crops that can nurture us through different seasons, early frosts, and dry spells. Today's education is a monoculture, planting a single crop at the behest of corporate America, leaving us at the mercy of its success or failure. Behind the façade of the new distance technologies lies a parched desert devoid of new ideas or creativity. Social progress requires a diverse, vibrant multiculture of ideas that only a truly public university can provide.

The public university is worth fighting for. But efforts are needed on many different fronts. Faculty need to get flushed out of their ivory towers and recognize they can play an important role in public life. It is common knowledge there is a strong undercurrent of anti-intellectualism in America, but too often faculty help to promote this by engaging in insular, arcane and just plain silly research and writing only relevant to a handful of other bored academics. University administrators reward faculty who publish in academic journals read by no one, and are not encouraged to develop as public intellectuals and educators. Professors should reject this arcane role and work to situate intellectual debate within public life. The public university is naturally situated to be in the forefront of this endeavor. Students and faculty must work together to wrest control of this public resource from career bureaucrats and corporate CEOs. Despite the efforts of those who would hurl the university into cyberspace, there is still an important role for our public university, bricks and mortar all.



Paul VanDeCarr

The Disappeared of Silicon Valley

(or, why I couldn't get that story)

by Paulina Borsook

It began innocently enough in early winter 1999. I had been working on a book for three years, and wanted to take a break by doing something shorter and not so wholly excavated from my own grim brain. So I called Kerry Lauerman, then an editor at *Mother Jones*. Lauerman told me they had been kicking around the idea of doing the anti-free-agent-nation story, about the people for whom being way-new-kewl-entrepreneurial just hadn't worked out. I told him he had to let me pursue this: being contrarian, and fond of underbellies, I leapt at the chance to work on such a piece.

I didn't anticipate huge problems: I had been knocking around high-tech since the early 1980s, had written for the trades and for corporations and for *Wired* and had a habit of overreporting, which meant I always talked to 10 people where most folks would talk to one. All of which meant I felt confident that my mesh of connections would serve well enough to find the people who might have revelatory things to say.

So I went to work, tracking down developers from game companies gone broke, founders of companies that died. I talked with bankruptcy lawyers and current employees of Hewlett-Packard in contact with ex-employees of Hewlett-Packard. I even interviewed my boy-friend's father, a worker in Silicon Valley's satellite industry since the 60s, figuring he'd know displaced older electronics industry workers. I was on the case daily and I was getting nowhere: no one wanted to talk to me.

I found this extremely odd, for I had bought into the Silicon Valley myth that it's OK to fail and everyone jokes about it and moves on and we are not hidebound scaredycats like those old smokestack Dow Jones Industrials corporate drones Back East—so I couldn't figure out what was going on. I wasn't on assignment for the *National Enquirer*; I had a reputation for being fair, even if folks didn't always like what I had to say. The only other time I had run into such stonewalling was when I played classic investigative reporter for a *Wired* profile on Microsoft cofounder Paul Allen. In that case, many people had a stake in keeping their sugar daddy pacified and distracted, and not letting certain disquieting facts be known. But as I wasn't focusing on any one particular person, and don't generally believe in conspiracy theories, I was puzzled.

Meanwhile, Lauerman left *Mother Jones*, so I approached the good and wise Scott Rosenberg of *Salon*, then the editor of the publication's technology section, and asked *him* if he would be interested in the story I had come to think of as "the disappeared of Silicon Valley"—for if, as the long-established statistic stated, nine out of 10 startups fail, and many companies limp along as zombies (that is, they never go public but they never abjectly fail and they stumble on for years) or get folded into other companies at rates that in no way compensate founders and original employees for their labor and lost lives—where were these people? Rosenberg agreed to take over the assignment, so to speak, and I kept trying.

I contacted Career Action Center (CAC) in Cupertino, Silicon Valley's main vocational-counseling resource. The counselor I talked to thought the story was a great idea, that it would make her clientele feel less alone, less prone to self-blame. She said she'd ask around to see if anyone was willing to talk. No one was. Same thing happened when I spoke with Alumnae Resources, the well-respected CAC San Francisco analog, and when I talked to a psychologist whose private practice was focused on helping people with career issues and reconstructing themselves after a business failure. Again, radio silence.

Flailing about and getting nowhere, I ran into Heidi Roizen, a former software company founder/CEO whom I had gotten to know as a source when she had been vice-president at Apple, and who had since gone on to be a world-class high-tech professional investor. When I explained what I was trying to do, she agreed that it was a story that needed to be told. Did she think any of her friends for whom the culture of startup and cash-out hadn't worked would be willing to talk to me? No, even though she did know folks who'd lost their houses or faced bankruptcy—but she did suggest I talk to one of her closest friends, a nice man named Tom Koznik, a consultant and business professor who taught entrepreneurship and marketing at the engineering school at Stanford.

Koznik invited me to sit in on his classes—where students worked on marketing plans and VCs gave guest-lectures—and spent a lot of time talking with me and trying to set me up with folks from his vast network who might be willing to talk.

Koznik had been a professor and a high-tech consultant for a long time, but even so, out of his huge network of connections, only two possible native-informants for my piece came forward, each currently one of his students. As background, it's important to know that graduates of Stanford engineering have pretty much been guaranteed their choice of $100,00 per year jobs, plus options and sign-on bonuses. They are young, mostly mortgage- and offspring-free, and are at the time in their lives where when young adults are generally reserved the right to deviate and flounder. Job security just cannot realistically be a concern of theirs.

But Silicon Valley, and Stanford in particular, has been a place where the specter of Yahoo founder/former Stanford graduate student Jerry Yang stalks the land; it's so obvious and it's so easy to make a billion dollars only the morally and intellectually defective can't make it. Never stated anywhere explicitly, it's been a statement of high-tech faith that's everywhere implicit.

One of the two kids who originally volunteered backed down, deciding he didn't want to talk to me about his experience with a failed venture. I promised anonymity, stating the amazing true fact that I have never broken my word to a source and always honored confidentiality. But no, he wouldn't talk, word came through to me a third-party that he was just too worried that what he told me might get traced to him and jeopardize his future. This, from an *undergraduate*, living in the longest peace-time boom the U.S. has seen, in the economic hotspot of the globe. The other young man actually did let me interview him: a Ph.D. candidate, he left graduate school to self-fund his idea; it didn't work out; and he had to spend a year or so working fulltime to pay down his debt before returning to school. Nothing tragic here—but the strange part came when he told me that I was one of the first people he'd told about it all, his friends and family really hadn't known much about it. Failure is too inconceivably shameful in his world.

As I was about to admit defeat on the piece, I was coincidentally given an assignment for *San Francisco* magazine to write about the endless stream of high-tech business books that all seemed to follow the same format where the heroic entrepreneur overcomes all obstacles, asserts individualistic behavior, and is rewarded with scads of money and inflated self-concept. What I realized, and what I wrote about for their September 1999 issue, is that these books were business-porn, as strict in their conventions as emotion-porn is vis a vis Harlequin Romances or action-porn is for Tom Clancy novels.

And thus, I reasoned, if all people were being fed in their media diet can be represented by the business porn that is "Business 2.0" and "Fast Company", and high-tech reportage in mainstream business mags has been just as breathless and celebratory, and newspaper business-reporting on high-tech equally gushy about what those rich crazy kids were up to next—how could anyone, for whom things hadn't worked out possibly feel anything but a deep personal shame that would require affirmations far beyond what Stuart Smalley could offer?

What I realized is that if you are of the elect, you *can* fail as the Silicon Valley myth has it. But if you are not, it's doubly unbearable because all you've heard is the success stories. It's rather like going through the pain of divorce, but living in a culture where only happy marriages are ever described; or trying desperately and unsuccessfully to have kids when all about you all you hear is about large families. In fact, one of the people who did talk to me about her failed startup, shrugged off the experience as 'that's just life, it's like when a relationship fails." But when a relationship fails, all culture, friends, and family understands, sanctions your right to grieve and suffer, knows it will take time to heal, that you've undergone something wrenching and awful. But not so in Silicon Valley—if you've failed, you can't talk about it, it's no big deal, and it never happens anyway. Never mind that startups demand heart, soul, and life—so if they crash, burn, or drive you away, what has happened to that heart, soul, life?

There was a perverse timeliness to the conclusion I was coming to, for Po Bronson had just published his best-selling "Nudist on the Late Shift", true tales of winning in Silicon Valley. In that summer of 1999, Bronson also wrote a *New*

But they told me I was *skilled*, that I was doing a *great job*, that they *neeeded me*...

Chris Carlsson

York Times magazine story, "Instant Company," which was a classic of the 'it's all so easy/we strike it rich to beat the band' genre. Bronson, whose prose is graceful, smart, and funny, probably didn't realize what his feature *really* said: that if you worked at a glam startup (such as Yahoo before it went public) or for a major Wall Street i-bank or previously for a VC or have a pedigree that includes an MBA or CS degree from one of the Silicon Valley designated-hitter institutions of higher learning—then all is well. But reading his piece—where all the founders of the high-concept, if unimaginative, epinions (let's use collaborative filtering so that we can make money off other people doing the work/providing the content!) had just such elite pedigrees—was rather like reading C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite*, updated for Internet Age. Of course these guys can raise money, never need flounder, are damage-proof. How different, really, was their fate from that of George W. Bush, who didn't really have the qualifications for Andover nor Harvard Business School, but got in anyway because he had been anointed?

When I finally gave up—or rather, realized the real story was a meta-story, about how and why the story I had wanted to do couldn't be written—was after a phone interview with one of my long-time excellent sources whom I always keep anonymous. A high-end high-tech headhunter who had been of great help to me in times past, she sympathized with what I was trying to do but told me that someone from *The Wall Street Journal* had tried to do the same story a few years before—and that reporter hadn't gotten anywhere, either.

Just as I had finally let go, someone finally did surface from all the networking I'd done who *was* willing to talk about his bruising startup experience. He was smart, self-aware, rueful—and married to a minister and displayed an overall level of psychological insight and emotional maturity that's very narrowly distributed in the general population—and is kazillion times more rare in high-tech. For in high-tech, introspection and attention to interpersonal dynamics are not fungible assets. In fact, they get in the way of being on on all the time and selling all the time to investors and potential employees and maybe even customers and and and...

My Deep Throat had worked on Wall Street and did have the requisite Stanford MBA. He told me the sad complex story of how his startup did well initially then got screwed over by bad management. He spoke of the damage to health and relationships and family life of going the startup way. He reminded me that most startups are not high-tech and are not venture-funded. He emphasized that you can lose your savings, your salary, and your sanity. He went on about the looting and lying that often characterize startups and that the heroes of a new company—the unsung techies or managers who actually get the work done—often get screwed when the company folds or gets acquired at a discount or goes public then tanks. He had put his life savings into the company, and was still in deep personal debt when I talked to him (his parents had needed to help him out with his wedding celebration).

I admired him for talking to me, but I couldn't figure out how to use one person to peg an entire piece. And professionally, I got overtaken by other projects and needed to be working on other things. As mercifully quirky as *Salon* is, I just couldn't see how a story about how a story about how I couldn't get the story, could interest them. And that was that.

But the failed entrepreneur who had come through for me checked back in the late autumn of 1999, wanting to know what I'd been able to do with his so-valuable confession. I told him that a story about how I couldn't get that story would only matter to cultural-studies types and journalism professors; that the concepts of self-censorship and the importance of what's there but that you don't hear about were too abstract, and not what most people want to read. He was sorry that the piece wouldn't run.

But the more I thought about it, as *The Industry Standard* was growing ever fatter and Time Inc. launched a new magazine solely devoted to the New New Economy, "E-Company", the more important it seemed that I did try to

BY THE PYRAMID

Driving homeward at dawn,
I felt again overloaded
by too much to do—
too much to do—
too-much-to-do-in-too-little-time.

Then I thought
of going at this hour
to set chokers in the snow and dark
above Granite Falls,
lunch-bucket with one broken snap,
rubber calk-boots two-sizes-too-big and more clownish
with their patches of red or yellow or blue —
and of walking toward my Hotel
after Night Shift at Warehouse 4-A in San Jose,
tossing grapes that arced like pearls
under streetlights,
catching ones in my mouth
with a crunch of teeth and squirt of juice,
biceps sore from throwing boxes—
both those jobs 14 years ago.

You could be one
of hundreds millions, I thought—
bent in some field,
repeating tasks in a line,
poor as the earth you rend,
tired unto deadening and soon
tired unto death—
instead of among the many
hurrying here,
worried about phone-calls and money,
In the shadow of this Pyramid.

by Don Paul

talk about what no one wanted to talk about. That the stigma of failure exists and is cruel in Silicon Valley, maybe more so because no one admits it's there. Folks may not have filed bankruptcy petitions but may have taken on an impossibly burdensome second mortgage; or have sacrificed their personal life to no end; or had to move away because it didn't work out—these are the disappeared of Silicon Valley.

What I thought was the validating, if bittersweet, coda to my failure came at the monthly dinner I attend from time to time in San Francisco peopled by an ever-changing cast of sweet smart nerds. There, I ran into a guy I knew from one of his earlier lives as a telecommunications policy wonk. He's since cycled through the public sector to academia into think-tank land and is now into startupsville. As a consequence, he's now involved with Silicon Valley's Entrepreneur's Forum (self-help and mentoring for the startupiste on the go). When I mentioned to him about my unfinished business writing about the shame-ridden disappeared of Silicon Valley, he nodded in recognition.

"We've tried to get those guys to come talk to our group about how they've dealt with failure."

"I know," I said, "They won't talk until they're back up on top."

"No,", he explained, "they won't talk to us at all about their failures, even when they've succeeded once again."

"Even the billionaires?"

"Even the billionaires."

But the story didn't end quite then. This very same tale of media collusion and market-timing in post-Netscape IPO irrational exuberance was eventually commissioned for *Brill's Content*. But alas, it was killed as it was heading from fact-checking to galleys by its Bright Young Editor-in-Chief (newly arrived from Tina Brown mentorship) in June 2000, because the first stories had started appearing in the national media about the shakeout from the NASDAQ crash of March 2000. Fashion (and timing) is everything.

Epilogue: Of course, in spring 2001, the stories of dotbombs and dotgones and vulture capitalists have replaced in the media the earlier techno-utopian free-market fairy stories. A website deadpool, www.fuckedcompany.com, allows people to rant and rave about the specifics of the collapse of the Ponzi scheme high-tech economy of the roaring 90s, how paperthin and Potemkin-village it has been. But when I read those postings on FC's Happy Fun Slander Corner, I have the disquieting feeling of reading daily transcripts from the trials of French war criminals. It's been said that when the Nazis invaded France, 90 percent of the French collaborated. But by the time the Allies invaded Normandy, 90 percent of the French were with the Resistance. No one much spoke up or out when their friends and neighbors were hauled away and the trains kept running East during the War, but everyone after the War proclaimed it was all such a pity, about the Disappeared. ❣

Hugh D'Andrade

Green Days in the Concrete Jungle

by Ted White

Nineteen years ago I moved to San Francisco to be a filmmaker. I went to film school, made some short artsy films and went on to make documentaries about bicycling as a radical political act. Though I loved making them, over the years I realized they were not the kind you make a living from and it became clear that the "day-job" (sometimes a.k.a. "shit-job") would likely be a fixture in my life.

I survived stints as pretzel vendor, espresso jerk, coat check guy, copy shop clerk and a handful of other odd gigs. Eventually, however, I found the ultimate artist's side-job: gardening. It allowed me to work in beautiful serenity sequestered in someone's backyard, away from the bullshit, the pretense, the traffic, the noise—in short, away from people. It allowed my brain to stretch out, relax and sunbathe. Since many of the tasks of the gardener are repetitive, I could get into a nice mindful/mindless groove and do a lot of creative thinking while I worked.

As a livelihood, gardening was rejuvenating, sensuous, and cured what ailed me—pointless unsatisfying work and people-centric attitudes towards our surroundings. Gardening showed me the other San Francisco, the natural one (or fairly natural anyway), a city of unexpected flora and fauna. This other San Francisco offered me a space to witness such sights as a huge barn owl napping in a Monterey Cypress above me, or a skunk popping out of a hole under someone's porch in broad daylight and then scuffling away. I found and rescued my dear cat Pepita, starving and trapped in the deluge of an automatic sprinkler system. I experienced green days in the concrete jungle, an incredible diversity of life. Just as the city offers itself as a fertile spot for punks, queers, artists, freaks, Chinese, Guatemalans, Iranians and Anglos, it seems as if pretty much any green life form with a will to grow can thrive in San Francisco. Any and all plant life can give it a go here, from Banana Tree to Princess Flower, Agave to Redwood trees, fig to fern.

One of the great ironies of gardening professionally is that you often work for those too busy to garden themselves or even enjoy their own garden. As you spend much of your day in the most scenic, tranquil places in the city while those you work for slog away, pushing paper and zinging e-mails. In doing so, they make the big money to pay you and the other service-providers: nannies, carpenters, housecleaners, personal coaches. So that you can putter around, snip, clip, whistle, weed, and tidy their little corner of paradise, your clients toil diligently downtown.

There is a tendency to be cynical about your clients. Over the years you might witness them upgrading from BMW to Lexus to LandRover and roll your eyes thinking: What the fuck? But actually, I've found that people who value gardens enough to pay someone to maintain theirs are connecting with something pretty deep. They may have positioned themselves askew from where their hearts lie, prioritized being in an office in a highrise over a lavender bed as a place to spend most of their time. Still, they possess a sense of nature's power and glory. Many clients over time become more and more devoted to their gardens. They learn about and begin to really understand their

When time begins to sound sexier than money, and green looks more vibrant than gold you know you're feeling good.

Minna Eloranta

plants, witness their growth habits and idiosyncrasies. They become increasingly entranced by the amazing play of sunlight, rainfall and decomposition, and realize how wonderfully simple it really all is.

Only chefs and maybe plumbers get to work with as much organic material in a day as gardeners do. Gardeners enjoy a slightly ruffian exterior and get to wear sexy tough-lookin' clothes: boots, gloves, dirty jeans, raggedy shirts. Gardeners get down and dirty and end the day with leaves and dust in our hair. In these dot-com days there is genuine pride in not making your living with a keyboard and mouse. And don't forget, gardeners are armed. With our pruning shears strapped to our sides in leather holsters we're the gangsta floribunda.

Gardening helps you feel tough and a touch bad-ass but also allows—even requires—gentleness. Gardening is about observing, tending to needs, stepping lightly, nurturing.

People dream of leaving the city and "getting away from it all," because in the country—"it" seems bigger, deeper, more permanent, more satisfying. After a day in the mountains or at the side of a clear stream, it's hard to go back to the city. You keep thinking of the mountain or the stream, like it was a beautiful person who smiled invitingly at you and now you're wondering why the fuck you just walked away. That's why we need city gardens, to keep those yearnings from getting too unbearable.

Maybe all this is a signal of a great turning. The garden, even a modest one offers a refuge away from techno-consumpto-think to just-sit-and-be. When time begins to sound sexier than money, and green looks more vibrant than gold you know you're feeling good.

Besides the urban vs. rural tug the gardener is immersed in the great struggle of control vs. chaos. Obviously one of the ongoing tasks of the gardener is weed eradication. To the gardener, weeds are the "other," the enemy. They are the enterprising interlopers who threaten to steal the livelihoods of the established plants. They threaten the very idea of the domesticated garden and mock one's loyalty to it. Yet, as plants they are brilliant players, mad geniuses and rogue warriors. Weeds find a way to do their thing. They zero in on a gap in the grid, throw down a root and grow like hell. Weeds are graffiti in the garden landscape, nature's taggers. They're outrageous, impressive and won't behave.

Gardeners are paid to maintain control. The paradox is that part of you wants to maintain order everywhere (clean pavement, swept driveways...), but you also find the innovative free-wheelin' weeds irresistible. Digging on your hands and knees, yanking or scraping, you start to ask yourself, what makes this particular plant a weed and some other not a weed? Strangely enough, people have imposed a caste system upon many plant species. *Oxalis*, *Euphorbia*, Thistle, all have "good" varieties and "bad" varieties. While you pay good money for some at the nursery your clients are paying you to rip out their evil cousins by the hundreds. It all becomes a little weird, and perplexingly hypocritical.

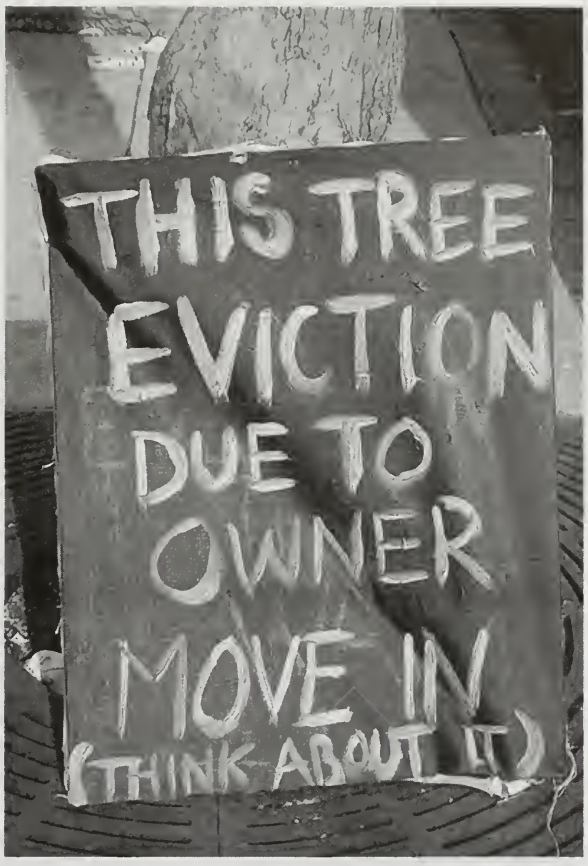


photo by D.S. Black

Personally, when I spy weeds growing through the cracks in the sidewalk I have two reactions: first, "Wow! You go, little green thing, kick ass!" The other, frighteningly knee-jerk, is: "Shit! Look at this chaos, what are these scruffy, "homeless" plants doing loitering here? There goes the neighborhood!" As a gardener, one is supposed to keep order. Nevertheless, we cheer the wild individual achievements within the plant world.

On the best days, gardening barely seems like a "job." In many ways it is the antithesis of what modernity is about. Since I don't use a mower, blower or other motorized stuff, for me it's a slow choreography of quiet handwork, which still requires age-old tools. Rake, shears, shovel, broom: tools which won't soon become obsolete. The yields of gardening are satisfying yet often intangible. You can help the plants, but can't force them to perform to your liking. Aside from, perhaps, flowers or fruits, there is no bottom line. The point of a garden is simple—to create room for natural beauty and calmness. While so many current occupations seem to be about creating complexity and drumming up urgency, gardening gifts us with patience, non-immediate gratification and most importantly, a sense of wonder.

Tremble

by James Brook

Capital and catastrophe in the life of the city . . .

glimmer of the young woman's nose ring
five short trees in dead-end square
hospital breeze patch of sun
no one stops on the way to church or store

8/25/00

the whole sad deal of culture
she watches hawks like a hawk
fog spills into the valley below
reverie a spin

8/25/00

there was a dream of text to live in
there was a dream of text to unwrite
with new distribution of sense to things
it was meant to be the worst case

8/25/00

palm strikes flat against glass
of first car to run the light
vertigo the deserted finance
a woman in tears

8/27/00

sports section business page christ
on the streetcar a wisp of a hymn
passing the ballpark
where logos and homeless cohabit

8/29/00

Filipina black glasses black vest from Jalisco
sings "una bella ragazza, chi me piace più"
sings over the stinking gasoline leaf-blower
sings over "Is this China? Africa? Man, America was
white!"

9/1/00

message chasing message
coin stacked on coin
am so tired
I dream of fatigue

9/21/00

you open their catalog of attractions
to suspension bridge page 21
"je veux I want je veux I want . . .
my parents are from Auschwitz"

10/5/00

celestial versions tell it on the phone
here's sweet gasoline on a hot day
toasting our Chirico sightlines
my giants converse mine tease mortals

10/5/00

hard labor alerts security
to be young
and dance beneath tropic palms
to mimic mimic's whole curve

10/5/00

now it forgets more science
erodes a diagram on the collage principle
as rental boats cavort in the bay of eviction
nomads circulate before windowless towers

10/15/00

mindless in his repertoire
he knocks her hot coffee spilling
"excuse me for living fucking bitch"
submerges into headphones

10/21/00

in the ranks of the coveted
well-coiffed idols are taken only by force
slaves at work and slaves at play big truck
exhibited navel the accelerated bitter rich

10/24/00

smile is magic to property
construction is magnet to garden
handshake builds the house
in disorder and wind and tears

11/5/00

the chartered creek flows
under the old mission walls
school children mustered
in single file on forgotten graves

11/5/00

that natural feeling on the hillside
near vertical staircase to vista
otra palabra el gringo bags en la colina
as prop for the re-gaze of production

11/6/00

where we stand is dusty constructivism
yellow tape hard hat container
cute goddesses of commerce
address us

11/13/00

disorder in the wind a short course
in point and shoot a kind of splotch
and the grinding action of coding wheels
blinking mammal in blue-white flash

11/16/00

hollow cinema orbits of floating trash
a solemn child with three umbrellas
a bodyguard a surround of taxpayers
each one each ghost caption typo need

11/25/00

two young women in black suits a man the same
in the empty park bayview postcard row victorians
equal new in the world equidistant modest
turn away to remote conversations on the black phones

12/1/00

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yellow yellow ye
llow yellow
yellow back-hoe
yellow yellow ye

12/6/00

squad car sphinx crossroads down and cry
apparent rotation of the red lights
doppler effect sings the urgent appeal
fall down and cry there in the panic the city

12/12/00

tall
crane
in
mid

12/31/00

TALE OF TOIL

My Life in the Search Engine

by Netizen X

We all came to the Internet because it was cool. Like moths to a bug lamp we swarmed around the exciting new technology, which allowed any average schmuck to get up and say his thing online. All you had to learn was some basic HTML and get a few pictures up there and then you could rant about anything you wanted to go off on. It was a level playing field and an open forum.

I moved to San Francisco to find out what multimedia was and get into it. Lots of fresh young college grads like me were learning some software and making a living on the Internet. It was emergent—it was uncharted territory and big corporations that didn't know exactly what was going on were throwing money at young people in the Bay Area to "create their online presence" and forge new territory in a new medium they did not yet understand. We were only happy to take their money.

First, I worked as a reviewer for a company called Netguide that aimed to be TV Guide of the Internet. They sent us out—brave collegians—to review hundreds of thousands of Web sites for their comprehensive online directory. They appeared to want to catalogue the entire Internet, because they had us reviewing entirely trivial sites, like the home pages of Pakistani grad students who had posted pictures of their cats. The World Wide Web seemed like a small place back then... entirely categorizable. We clattered away on the night shift, turning in review after review of sites great and small. They paid us well (for writers) and periodically threw open-bar parties where everybody got shitfaced. It was a good job for the slacker mentality, leaving plenty of room for games of Duke Nukem.

But it could not last. Eventually, the parent company in New York grew weary of shelling out cash on a company that showed no signs of profitability in the near future. They axed us in mass, but my friend Stuart and I just laughed. This gravy train had pulled into the station. What's funny is that, if the company had just stayed the course, they would have been miles ahead of all the subsequent companies trying to be the welcome mat to the Internet. The term du jour was "portal." All companies wanted to be the first stop on the Internet. All companies wanted to be Yahoo! Instead, they bailed and simply threw away their wads of venture capital. But who really cares anyway?

I went to work for CNET. They told me I was working on a top-secret project that would shake the foundation of the Internet with its originality. It would be the portal of portals. All people would turn to it for guidance on the World Wide Web. They gave the project the code name "Gunsmoke" and they made us swear that we would not discuss it with friends or family. Eventually the project would be knighted "Snap!" to give it the same exclamatory immediacy of Yahoo!, I suppose. They implied that we would all have nice tasty slices of the pie for our extra time and energy. They cajoled us into working weekends and holidays, extolling the virtues of sacrifice and subtly threatening our job security for lack of enthusiasm.

It was the one time in my entire tour of the industry that employees discussed forming a union. One friend of mine, who, like so many of us, had hauled over from Netguide, called an impromptu meeting of producers to discuss the veiled threats of management. There was the snap! of discontent in the air—a collective feeling of disgust at the scare tactics of management forces. The time had come to put a foot down and declare that there is at least some bullshit that won't fly.

But, like so many worker kvetch-ins, it blew over. The employees at the meeting decided not to press the issue and the ardent sense of injustice fizzled. After it got wind of the meeting, management successfully completed a program of divide-and-conquer that eventually ran troublesome elements out of the company, to be replaced by those who would dance to their tune. They introduced some new benefits, like back massages, to caress that nagging feeling of exploitation away. Eventually, it was only the yes-men that remained.

I left the company on no particular terms with anyone. I had successfully made myself invisible in the office, coasting on my blind acceptance of mediocrity and voicing no adverse opinions. Eventually, my self-loathing and complete disregard for the project at hand forced me to quit, even though I had no other job to fall back on. At that point, I was numb to my desires, because they had no relation to what I did for a living. I had become a Dilbert.

In my final week in the company, they put up one of those scrolling LED displays to flash information down on us. The wiseass who installed it posted comical messages on it, like "Get back to work, slaves!" It was funny because, at that point, it simply acknowledged the actual situation. A rare bit of office honesty.

After a brief stint of trying to do my own thing, I reentered the Internet corporate world through the doors of LookSmart. This time I wore the hat of HTML coder, but, factually, I was little more than a glorified temp, commissioned to the most repetitive and mindless tasks. I justified it to myself, saying I needed the experience, eyeing the options, and taking

solace in the steady paycheck. The work was monotonous, to say the least, but the atmosphere was not overly oppressive. In the beginning...

After a few months, we were moved to a Soma building that had recently been converted from a sweat shop. Employees made jokes about how it had just become a different kind of sweat shop, but — all jokes aside—it was not pleasant. There was no air conditioning during the summer months and the whirring fans could do little more than stir hot air around. In order to get any ventilation, we had to keep the windows open on a construction site where a pneumatic pile driver would ceaselessly clang through the day. I recall one day in particular when a pipe in the middle of the room suddenly began hissing violently and half the office jumped out of their chairs and made for the door.

It is the sacrifice that a start-up expects of you. Employees have to suck it in for the good of the company and give their all and not complain about unreasonable working conditions because the big payoff is around the bend. There's no room for slackers or complainers here, only self-starter problem solvers. That was all well and good, except that LookSmart had been around for four years. I also hasten to point out that the offices of marketing and advertising were pleasant and cool.

I coded away through the year, keeping out of office politics and waiting for the ballyhooed Initial Public Offering. When the company went public, the stock price floated nicely and everyone let out a huzzah of success. Unfortunately, when the stock price was nice and high, many of us could not act on it because our options had not yet vested; by the time they had, the stock had dropped to around half its value and by the time the imposed holding period was over, it was already headed down the crapper. Today, the stock price hangs out at around $2, which is less than what I paid for it. Many people suffered the same fate, in addition to facing severe tax liabilities for exercising their options when the price was high. The giddy intoxication of the IPO faded away into the sober reality of the Internet stock-market plummet.

After the IPO, LookSmart moved to shiny new offices on 2nd Street. We were moved to lovely new half-cubes in a converted SOMA warehouse and there was plenty of hot cocoa in the concession room. No longer did we hear the incessant banging of the pile driver—just the occasional crowd roar from the newly renovated Pac Bell park. Now that it was a public company, LookSmart had to straighten its proverbial tie and institute certain corporate features to make sure it was reaching maximum productivity. All of sudden, there seemed to be four meetings a day about monetizing every page, maximizing dollar amounts on every ad-banner click-thru, and massaging the design needs of our many corporate partners. The business department was cutting affiliate deals and dumping work on the production team that we really couldn't handle. With each new step toward productivity, I felt more and more uncomfortable with my working environment. I felt shaggy and unkempt and increasingly irrelevant. I found myself in more and more meetings where I appeared to have absolutely no idea what was going

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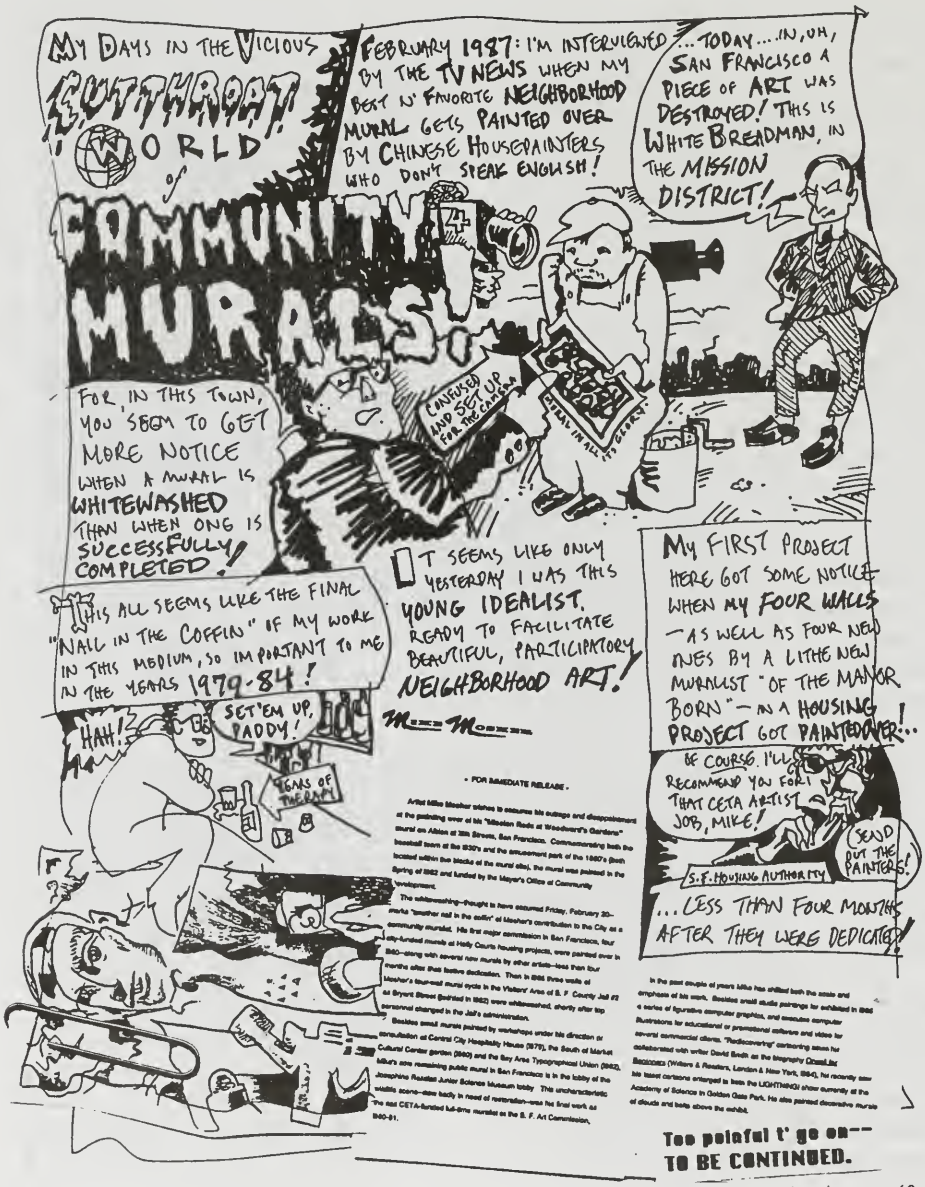
on and could not bring myself to find out. I was doing the bare minimum to stay employed and had long since lost interest in creating the Internet's best Web portal. I could really give a rat's ass. Meanwhile, they put up a sign at the entry hall to the building with the company logo, peppered with inspirational descriptors that had presumably popped out of the mouths of satisfied LookSmartians. "Fun!" "Focused!" "Savvy!", etc. It was supposed to put a little spring in your step on the way to the grind, but I took it more as a sign that I needed to be leaving the company.

As I worked up the gumption to quit, my resolve solidified when the company instituted a "360 degrees" peer review system—a Byzantine process whereby colleagues give reviews of each other's performance. Assuredly, this is a state-of-the-art system for maximizing employee efficiency, but it struck me as more of a way to instill fear by underscoring that any of your compatriots may be monitoring your performance—and your bad attitude or sloppy performance could come up in your next review. To my mind, it was a new twist on the panopticon... a way of isolating each individual and making any employee suspicious of his neighbor. I went to the little workshop they gave on how to give constructive feedback, laughed to myself, and gave notice that week.

I went on to another start-up that is now moribund and bears no mention. It was, in fact, a good job, insofar as I worked only part-time and nobody seemed to care that I didn't really give a shit. I was in the first round of layoffs, which was really no surprise, considering my status and attitude. Part-timers and contractors usually get the axe first. However, the market is now sputtering and there is very little work to be had. A year ago I could have bounced into my next job with a couple of well-placed e-mails. Instead, I've been out of work for two months now and nothing's on the horizon.



Mike Mosher

But there is very little sympathy for the belly-aching Dot Bomb casualties, and why should there be? The Internet workers, originally so hip and groovy, came to be seen as money-grubbing carpetbaggers with oversized cars and little imagination. They bought up artist spaces, co-ops and cafes and turned them into offices. They ran the rents up sky high and ran the poor people out of town. If I wasn't an SUV-driving yuppie, I was still digging for gold along with everybody else and came up with a fistful of empty promises. I got screwed, but can I ask you to cry for me? Does anybody want to hear my rendition of the "Dot Bomb Blues"? If I wasn't part of the solution, was I part of the problem?

You can bring it up at my next peer review... ?

continued on page 60

Bus

fiction by Marina Lazzara

The dew is rather warm considering the fog, I could find words to describe it, but instead I caress the flies on my eyelids and spread the morning newspaper across the bus station floor. I make the flies advance with caution, take chance to spare me their flights. The flapping is my stomach. I'm hungry. The joy, their back legs. It's a gamble that you're gonna reach a place that somehow renews you, and there's an aftermath that forces that feeling. Being or becoming. Coming or going. A knowledge. A trendy technology. Something exotic like a masquerade or trees.

When leaving the city, even in the grounding of the city, the first person to leave has to touch her forehead with her left thumb and decrease her rage by a few punches. Road trip games. Time tests. Final and wandering sidewalks like luck... It can be noon in the morning yet incredibly vinyl in the way that I stretch it on and over me. Fitted, sly and imaginable although so real the shape of everything, I expose myself to a dream at the same time the sky lightens up. It's five-fifteen, no seventeen in the morning, and I'm not ready to rise. I'm traveling up an escalator to a bus going North.

Redwoods.

A quick silver smell of tar comes up from the floor ventilation, and I just inhale and believe it's my nature.

I expect this ride to give me everything. The hump-top rooftops, the dirty deeds of all the fucked forces of the pigeons who at first never even belonged here. The feel of the urban air stoning me with the openness of all that outside getting ready for all those trees, trees- Almost like watching fire horizontally and melting into the building next to it and deciding to lean into something but not quite sure yet what that something is. But I expect something.

While I wait I practice fountains by first practicing my spit and then making it look as though that spit is a fountain without giving away the fact that even the fountain isn't the same kind of fountain that's made by spitting, or a reason, that is, for anyone around me to believe I know anything at all about fountains. This is relatively easy to do.

Please pass time back down now please, will ya?

In this bus station, people wander past windows, check themselves out, hold luggage. There's a window display for those who sneak a peek. Assuming we all rely on our peripheral vision in moments of extreme confusion, an illusion of being part of a bigger picture, like glass reflecting from one side of the street to the other, a theater town, a reflection of myself folds into reflections that fold, of course, into other reflections. A work day for these drivers.

Yet a window scene for seasonal change is only a display that squares off dull psychology. No matter how often anyone walks past the bus station's window, they still seem old-fashioned, dull, a swollen look of boredom in their eyes. Even gadgets don't make anyone seem more modern, more progressed, more user friendly. Even the slick phones, briefcases, laptops, pagers. None of these things make anyone more accessible. Water trickles down glass. Window sweeps. Obscene, old victories snooze in the station's boughs. The hunter knows the deer has enough blood in its brain to dye its own hide after dying. There are no traces of wounds or pranced tracks here.

Ah. On board. Incurable, the way the seat spreads down the back. There's junky breath in the rear lighting the mildew of the transient porta-pottie, and the jet blue ammonia smell behind our ears is bigger than my fountain, a year-long spout in the rain. The world is becoming 3-D anyway so why bother with how incredibly perfect one can spit their water from one side of the bus to the other like a fountain. But I'm gonna practice this and time the streetlights to my spits, yet nothing's gonna make the lights turn any faster, or any greener for that matter except a woman's joke about the bus driver and his hat, on fire like it often almost is whenever he shifts at the fuller intersections. When the cars pass I imagine burnt sienna rain drifting over the outside window of my room, so full of light when the dark hits the wetness of the glass like shapes & phrases.

Dim grey-green glow coming up from the bottom right side of my seat.

I begin to master the fountain on board by not using my hands to help push the water from the back of my neck. Only by tilting back my neck could I perform the needed arch after drinking the water down, leaving half of it deep but not past my Adam's Apple. It has to do with the tongue extending the same motion outward as my neck would want to do if it was longer. My hands, for once, were idle at my sides and to keep me from losing control, I'd often set them in my pockets, safe there from wanting to help as always in some tightly maternal manne. "You really should give yourself a break from that

phone, " I say passing the Man on my way to the bathroom. "I read they're finding cysts the shape of cell phones in the ears of heavy users." "Really?" he says dialing. "Don't you have to practice spitting or something?" "Well," I say as I walk on. "I do have to pee. That's like spitting."

Minna Eloranta

Child with a Play Station, all night long. Child with a Play Station, keeps playin' that song. Keeps playin' that song. Isn't there an old saying about how it takes an entire corporation to raise one child? Or is that tribe? An entire corporation to raise one tribe?

It has to do with timing. A point at which things begin to click. I gotta time my transport down the hill and see now as this moment of riding. How important is having anything if you begin to believe it makes you live better?

Today was a dry day. A man and a muzzled dog came on after the bus driver took a vote so they could come aboard. As long as he kept the muzzle on the dog was the basic idea. The man agreed the dog didn't know how to bark. The dog, he said, was deaf and that was why he stomps his right foot twice on the ground when he wants his attention. We thought that was something we'd keep an eye on. How loud exactly, we asked, is the stomp? (Was it louder than a phone ring. A Play Station? Was it louder than the laptop booting up?) The man said he was never one to wait and bargain. He would take his chance on a more compassionate busload. We had to take his word that the stomp wasn't very loud or tell him to leave right then. And we did. They did. He left right there and then. The dog never made it up the steps. The bus driver waited anxiously near their luggage with the open luggage door. We gave him the signal. The man and his dog walked away. As he went back to the driver, he forgot to shut the luggage door. I noticed it right away. Didn't say a word. I wanted to see some baggage fly.

The message comes and it's simple. He just says Fuck and I pull my ankles in from the aisle to get out of the way. He's walking to the bathroom pushing a pointed stick into his palm. The draft down my legs is incredibly reminiscent of the bus station itself. It's another fixture but the same light and we keep rolling along. The man with the voice behind me tires earlier tonight. The battery dying, he talks louder with each syllable and for a moment, looking through his window, he is alone. But I hear his knees knocking on my seat. It's not quite dark so I don't think it's time to sleep. Nothing behind my eyes treats me to visions, and so at this point in the trip my ideas are tiny sonnets to the ceiling, dusty lime-green and peeling orange paint exposed in the corners near the window seams.

Where cell phone conversations are background noise, my yawn is attention. Deep in the heart of the motor, a sound grows consistent. The mousey sly of the engine alarms itself only at the sight of future street lights, but in the meantime, while moving close out of dark morning, it can be quieter than its daylight noise. But I'm overcome by closure, or lack of stretch-space and natural noise so that suddenly without warning, my mouth opens out a yawn that turns every head in front of me to look for me, the sounder of that sound, and everyone behind me to stretch their necks upward for me, the face of that sounder, and with slight shakes of their heads, my fellow passengers drop, tired and contagiously disgusted, to their neck tilted, head-dropped, sleepy postures.

Meanwhile, I don't allow the man behind me to put his feet too far up my ass as I sit there in front of him pretending to sleep, pretending to push sleep weight back in his direction. It's okay really, he's just being superstitious. If his phone rings, his legs stay stretched to accommodate his pocket size. He tells his next caller about his fashion future vision. How fashion will be designed to hold personal communication devices, cell phones, palm pals, slips of velcro, a dot com uniform. I think how that's already being done when he says,

"Oh, it's already being done?" In the illusion of the conversation, he really could be talking to me. By the time he hangs up, I know so much about him: his dislike for seafood, his lack of social life, his mother's maiden name, his itinerary of meetings for the upcoming week.

Brakes like a quake rumble and shake. A sense of insecurity flows through me. I don't have enough to do.

In a world of beeps and buttons, fountains are unique, utterly ultimate.

I start moving around to empty seats. A change of perspective is always good for the depressed. Change inspires growth. Growth provides some bloom. When I find someone who'll talk to me, the first question is often the same: What do you do? Now does this mean what do I do each day, what do I do for a living, what are my future goals, how do I spend my time? I automatically answer this question at first with "Write poetry". There's often a giggle, a browraised smile, and a further explanation of "No, really, I mean for money?" Gradually, as the question stays the same, I begin to answer with "I breathe."

At one point, I fantasize about stealing his phone. This comes to me after we pass through a small town with a bank that displays a sign reading "Celebrate Convenience." Inside this bank is also a dry cleaners, a post office and a coffee shop. The phone man likes this. Thinks it makes the world a *better* place.

We begin to reach my destination. It feels almost impossible that I'll feel differently once I smell that smell, that open ended, somehow hollowy freshness that comes when fewer buildings surround you. A smell reminiscent of mornings before all the years of nicotine and cars. A smell that works the mind as much as the body. But still in this bus are the bus smells. The false air, the mingling body odors, the smells of time passing while space sections out as a long vibrating line the windows frame. I'm on the last lap like the horse races, a moment that rushes for some but for me, I would rather the horse and his rider be taken over by gravity and fall in that last turn while other horses jump spontaneously, or trip like drunk cross-country skiers whose large leggings get snagged up with each other. That last lap when the four muscled knees of the horses seem to vibrate in midair. One horse falls to the side but never to the ground. In the illusion through dust, the bystanders see the running horse ride the air directly above the tracks, halfway on its side, when the left ear flaps down and sweeps the land. The precision of ride the expert jockeys take and the rugged trained strength of the horse's body, add in the power of motion and speed, spice it with time, and rarely do they fall. Gravity is overcome. The audience faints upward and almost silences. Smells are not a gamble. It is what you smell. Time is a gamble. It never smells.

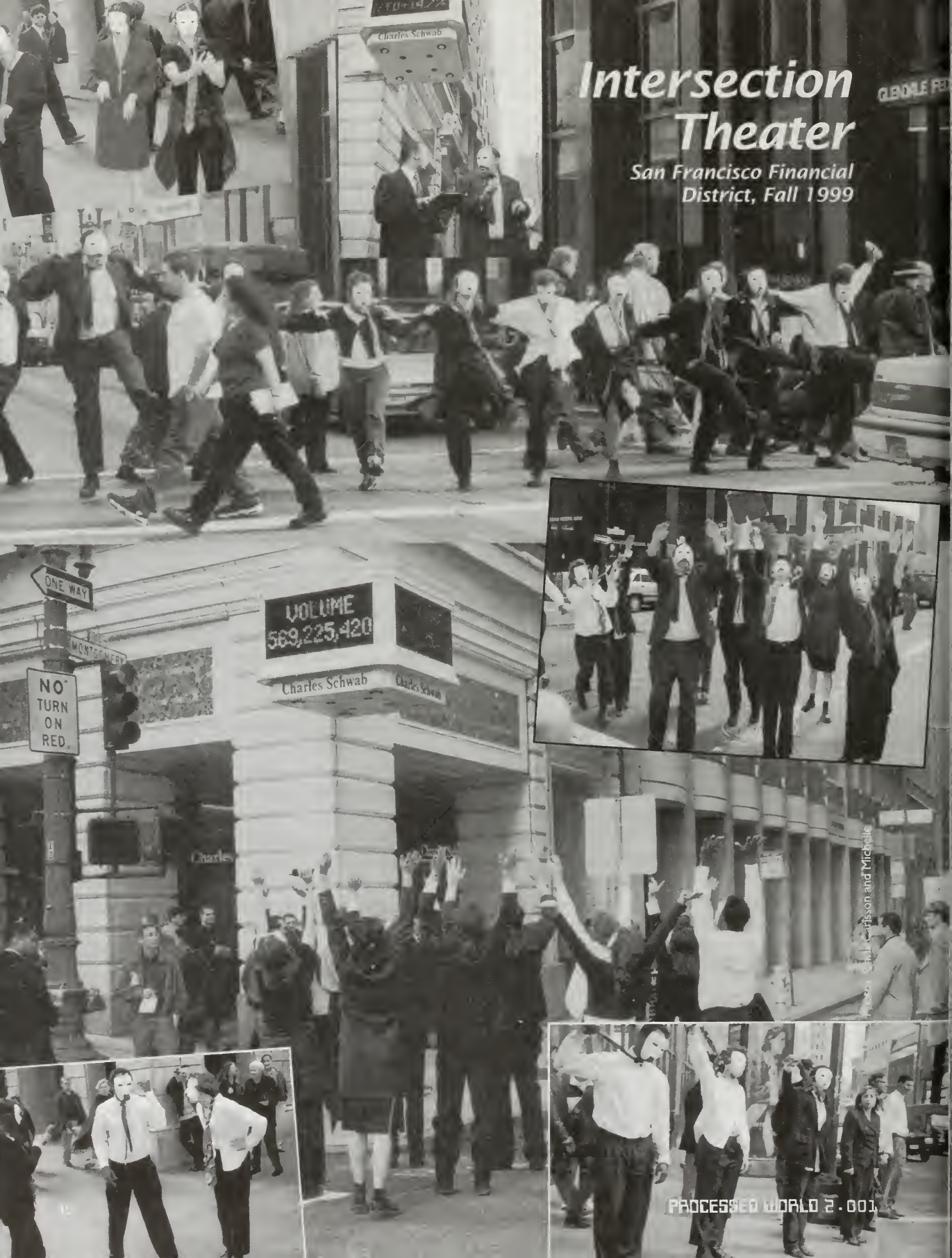
At this point, I'm bored. That last lap, as I've said, bores me. The phone man becomes more obnoxious with my boredom, or else is catching up before he departs. The calls persist, speed up, take more time to complete. This man can't be alone with his thoughts, invades my thinking. That phone will be mine to burn, I declare to myself. That phone will be mine.

I practice my fountain a few times arching over my extended legs and aim for the now empty seats across the aisle. This is my last chance to practice so I change my direction and calculate how to distract him. I succeed in annoying him, spray his laptop cover with my work, feel moments of boredom bliss, watch him turn off the phone in frustration and position his body on the seat to ward off my flowing charms. My fountains spray and flame like burning water fires and the busload, as if watching a yawn, focus on our display. He is wet and insane with my habit but eventually I run out of water. He laughs so hard he unknowingly drops his phone at my feet. I kick it toward me, reach down to pick up something I never dropped. Shove it into my bag.

The bus driver's monotonous voice informs us we've reached there. Someplace different at least than where we were. Phone man grabs his briefcase from above his head, leaves the bus in laughter.

I take my bag from beneath the bus, grateful that it never flew out miles back. Walking toward the lushness of green, the path of my sanity, I stop to gather my thoughts and view the treetop arches in their place.

Like the feel of the feet after rollerskating for hours, the hum of his voice stays with my ears. The afterthought of a beehive alive in my brain. His thoughts stay with me so I try forcing it out by singing out loud when from my bag a ring echoes, a dysfunctional bird out of its nature here. I answer and it's him talking on, but this time directly to me. "Give back the...." and I'm spooked, spooked by the continuation of our spaces still colliding, and like a bad horror flick I again like a child hide my ears in the heat of my palms and slam the phone receiver back into its body. This time there is no strategy, no bets to make or gambles to digest. I just dig a hole next to a Sequoia where looking up brings rays of dark branches into thin snowflake shapes on the light blue sky. I dig and the ringing rings. I bury it and there is still ringing. I walk into the green deepness, get small while the trees stretch up. I am tiny when the ringing finally stops.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San Francisco's Space Wars

by Tom Wetzel

"Dot-coms' demise could alleviate rent problems" read a recent *Examiner* headline, more promise than reality. In the Mission District, north of the outdoor narcotics zone along 16th Street, dozens of households received rent increases of 10 to 60 percent in March. These residents live in a group of buildings built after 1979, which exempts them from rent control. One tenant, Raul Garcia, a janitor, had his rent jacked from $900 to $1,200 a month. In response, the residents have begun to organize a tenants union.[1]

The Mission District has been ground zero in a class war as tenants resist the capitalist forces that are squeezing the working class out of the city. Since 1990 the proportion of employed residents who are not professionals or managers has declined by about 8 percent.

Dot-Com Invasion

Five years ago American capitalism discovered the Web. Sources of capital turned the spigots full on for all sorts of schemes to exploit the Internet. As NASDAQ stock prices lost all touch with reality venture capitalists poured funds into dot-com startups betting on eventual IPOs or buyouts by larger firms. Tech startups in the city received $1.6 billion during just one quarter last year.[2]

As dot-com CEOs scurried to find space for their newly crafted ventures, the office market tightened and rents for Class A office space shot up from $28 per square foot in 1996 to $77 in 2000, surpassing office rents in Manhattan.[3] Downtown evenings reverberated to the sound of pilings being driven for new office buildings. The Mayor's Planning Commission just couldn't say "No" to more office space. Where would the people working in these buildings live? The Mayor and Board of Supervisors (the city council) weren't losing any sleep worrying about that.

Multi-media and Internet-related businesses had grown virtually overnight to become the city's second-largest industry, employing 47,000 people by last fall.

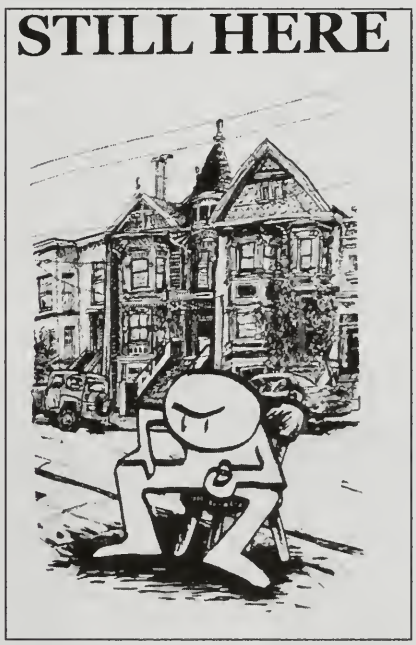
The high-tech sector's appetite for space was seemingly insatiable, enticing landlords to dump low-rent uses. Dance studios or social service agencies aren't profit centers. As the dot-com boom threatened to destroy the city's artistic subcultures and drive nonprofits out of existence, the ensuing struggle spawned a wide range of protests, from illegal occupations to a "Million Band March" of evicted musicians.

The city has experienced two space wars over the past year—a fight over living space—and a fight over "commercial" space. A common theme that linked these two was the threat that displacement poses to the city's social and cultural diversity.

Who Can Afford to Live Here?

Even before the fin de siècle dot-com boom, high-tech growth in Silicon Valley was adding to stress on the city's housing supply as increasing numbers of tech workers drove the freeways or rode commuter trains from the city to jobs in suburban office parks. Meanwhile, the city's housing supply had been inching upward at the tepid rate of about 1,300 new units per year for the past two decades.[4] The sudden surge of 130,000 new jobs during the last five years twisted a tight housing market into a savage bidding war for living space. From 1999 to 2000 the average rent for a vacant one-bedroom apartment rose 29 percent.[5]

A recent RentTech survey found that rent for a vacant one-bedroom apartment averaged $1,888. This is more than the entire take-home pay of a union janitor making $13 an hour. Food service workers in the city who average $9.50 an hour will be hard-pressed to find a place they can pay for. Twentysomethings who grew up in the city are often forced to live at home with their parents.



San Francisco Print Collective

Of course, many tenants pay much less than the current market rate due to rent control. The median rent in the city in 1999 was $860, meaning that many people face the prospect of their rent doubling if they have to move for any reason. Buying isn't an option either. At the end of last year the median price of condos and houses in the city was $475,000. In five years residential real estate prices have inflated 77.2 percent,[6] and only about one out ten households can afford to buy a house.

The majority of people who are evicted are simply forced to leave San Francisco.

The Mission's Working Class Roots

The Mission District has been a working class area for a long time. Union organizing was a strong presence in the Mission in the early 20th century. Two notorious Mission District labor activists in the '10s were ex-Wobbly Tom

Mooney and anarchist Warren Billings. In 1916 Mooney was trying to unionize the workers of the Market Street Railway streetcar system when he and Billings were framed for a bombing they didn't do.

In 1914 the city's unions built their headquarters, the AFL Labor Temple, at 16th and Capp Streets, which became the center of strategizing and organizing during the city's historic 1934 general strike. This was merely the most dramatic symptom of a heightened activism and solidarity among workers in San Francisco in that decade. The main center of this working class strength was among the longshore, shipyard and maritime workers—the heart of the city's economy in the '30s and '40s.

The northeast Mission is the neighborhood's historic industrial district, which developed around the city's original railroad link to San Jose, which encouraged factories, breweries and warehouses to locate nearby. The dense Mission neighborhood that grew up adjacent to the work sites provided a pool of workers for these industries. The industrial district thus helped to reinforce the Mission's working class character.

Many of the larger plants had closed during the '70s and '80s. Best Foods moved its mayonnaise operation to Guatemala in 1990, adding to the myth of the city's industrial zones as an abandoned wasteland of boarded up warehouses. In the late '90s the developers and their allies exploited this myth to gain city approval to cannibalize the industrial land for luxury loft and dot-com office development.

In reality, blue-collar production, distribution and repair industries had not declined in San Francisco during the decades of so-called de-industrialization. The proportion of manufacturing jobs remained constant in the city from 1970 to 1990 at nine percent of total jobs. While some larger operations did close, many smaller firms replaced them (e.g. Timbuk2, which makes custom courier bags for bike messengers). Auto repair and manufacturing have been a source of blue-collar jobs for Mission District residents—18 percent of the employed residents worked in manufacturing in the '90s.

Displacement of such industries creates an imbalance between available jobs and the backgrounds and skills of local residents. If a welder or sewing machine operator loses her job, it's not likely she will be hired as a Java programmer or Web site designer the following week.

The Bulldozer as Agent of Class-Cleansing

In the decades after World War II direct government intervention to aid the capitalist economy was still in vogue in elite circles. An application of this idea was the use of the redevelopment bulldozer to forcibly remove working class people from valuable central city real estate.

Many of the young male workers of the '30s strikes had lived in single room occupancy (SRO) hotels and lodging houses along 3rd Street in the South of Market area (SOMA). The 3rd Street worker's district was eventually bulldozed in the '60s, but not without a major fight, in which retired longshoremen and others from the '30s era played a role. Today's low-income senior housing in that area and nearby Yerba Buena Gardens exist only because of that struggle.

In the '60s the city attempted to apply the bulldozer approach to the Mission District as well. Mission Street is the "Main Street" of furniture stores and produce and meat markets that runs through the district. In the '60s Mission Street was being dug up for a BART subway and the city wanted to bulldoze the areas around the 24th Street and 16th Street subway stations for high-rise apartment towers.

This sparked a broad-based effort at community organizing, based on the Saul Alinsky model from places like the Woodlawn neighborhood in Chicago. Thousands of people in the Mission became involved in scores of community groups, which were linked into the Mission Coalition Organization (MCO). As many as a thousand people attended MCO community congresses.[7]

San Francisco Print Collective

"Capital Fucks Us"
San Francisco Print Collective, photo by Dimitri Loukakos

The MCO proposed an alternative development strategy for the Mission based on funding of nonprofits from federal Model Cities grants. The city, under Mayor Joseph Alioto, eventually agreed to the MCO's proposal, which led to the formation of nonprofits like the Mission Housing Development Corporation (MHDC), a builder of affordable housing, and Mission Economic Development Association (MEDA), which provides services for small businesses. The Mission was able to avoid demolition of the heart of the neighborhood only because of the intense community activism that was channeled through the MCO.

Diversity and Its Material Base

The '60s was a period of rising real worker incomes and many people were leaving central city neighborhoods like the Mission for the new suburban tracts along the freeways. The demographics of the Mission were changing, with people of Central American and Mexican descent becoming a majority by the '70s.

In *Magical Urbanism* Mike Davis has argued that the Latino migration into American cities has helped to reinvigorate city character and the democracy of public space. The Mission District illustrates his point, from the throngs of people on foot on Mission Street to the murals that add color to the streetscape.

In the '90s, the Mission District was home to about a third of the city's Latino population. Cultural venues like the Mission Cultural Center and Galeria de la Raza, and the numerous businesses and services along Mission and 24th Streets, make the Mission the cultural and commercial heart of the Latino community in San Francisco. For immigrants, stores and service providers that speak Spanish are part of a support network that includes friends and family members. This working class, predominantly low-income, community would not be sustainable without cheap rents.

Affordability also drew a significant number of artists and political activists to the Mission District. By the early '90s the Mission had a dozen theaters, such as The Lab and the Theater Rhinoceros, which use the former union meeting spaces in the Redstone Building (the former AFL Labor Temple). Dance rehearsal and performance spaces (such as Dance Mission and Dancers Studio/Footwork), and other kinds of studio or rehearsal space were scattered about the area.

Rents were low enough that a person could work part-time as a drywaller or audio tech and spend their free time doing experimental videos or writing political commentary or novels. Affordability also made the city a refuge for people fleeing Central American death squads or queer kids escaping Bible Belt prejudice.

"For decades," writes Rebecca Solnit,"—college students, musicians, artists, writers—have been moving into the Mission, which some poor whites never left, but many of the artists and radicals who were raised there or arrived as adults are Latinos..." In fact the subcultures of artists and activists that Solnit describes in *Hollow City* can only thrive within the larger context of working class neighborhoods because they share the same requirement for cheap space.

Loft Boom Colonizes the Mission

Ironically, the city's so-called "live/work" law derives from the struggle of a group of artists evicted from the Goodman Building in 1983. A law was passed modifying the building codes so they could erect a new building that would combine studio and residential space.

With the onset of the dot-com boom in the mid-'90s, the anti-union Residential Builders Association began to exploit the "live/work" law to build hundreds of loft condos in SOMA and in the adjacent northeast Mission. The builders were able to increase their profits by using cheap industrial land. The law exempted them from many city fees and from providing affordable housing units. As the city bulked up on its population of dot-com managers and marketing gurus,

flush with stock options and six-figure salaries, prices of the loft units soon soared to $400,000 and more. The ultra-modernist design of the live/work boxes presents a stark face to the surrounding community, reflecting their character as a fortified colony in a working class neighborhood—the garage door opens as the SUV approaches and then the fortress door clangs shut behind.

Dot-Com Contradiction

The rapid expansion of multi-media and Internet-related firms in the city in the late '90s allowed graduates of local college multi-media programs to jump into entry-level jobs paying $30,000 to $50,000 a year.

Some writers and artists are able to find work in the dot-coms doing design or content work, though the work they do is driven by the commercial needs of their employers, not their own creative interests. Some work part time to retain more free time for doing their own thing, but the high-cost of housing makes it increasingly difficult to survive without long hours of work.

The large numbers of creative and technical people living in or near the city is a key reason the dot-coms wanted to locate in San Francisco. Displacement fueled by the dot-com boom led to angry rhetoric attacking "dot-commers." The "dot-commer" tag obscures distinctions of income and power. The people who simply work in the industry weren't calling the shots. The venture capitalists, dot-com CEOs, office developers, landlords of commercial buildings and top city leaders were making the relevant decisions.

Some rank-and-file dot-commers were in a bind. Friends were being evicted, their favorite bands were losing practice space, the boom was destroying things they liked about the city. The New Economy was eating its own tail.

Eviction Epidemic

Throughout the '80s, the presence of working class people of color in the Mission had acted as a barrier to attracting the white professionals and managers who were moving to the city in increasing numbers. To the west of Valencia Street was an area of transition into Noe Valley and the Castro, where professional and managerial people already predominated. But east of Valencia Street only 15.8 percent of the employed residents had professional or managerial jobs in 1990. Despite its close proximity to downtown, the Mission District remained a neighborhood of comparatively cheap apartments.

photo by Dimitri Loukakos

A large proportion of the housing stock in the Mission District consists of duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes. With large numbers of high-salaried people desperately looking for a place to live, owners of these properties were able to cash in. These buildings are ideal targets for Ellis Act conversions. The state Ellis Act permits a property owner to empty a building of its tenants. The owner can then sell off the units as a tenancy-in-common (TIC).

Ellis Act and owner-move-in evictions soared in the city in the late '90s. This trend was particularly strong as the NASDAQ bubble reached its peak last year, with high-tech employees cashing in on their stock options. Ellis Act evictions in the Mission District alone went from 14 in 1995 to over 660 last year. City wide, 2,761 households were evicted between June 30, 1999 and June 30, 2000.

City Leaders Give the Finger to the Mission

At the corner of 17th and Valencia a two-story building with turn-of-the-century white terra cotta facade has just been demolished. A five-story luxury apartment building is slated to go in here, replacing Ed Arroyo and Sons, a body shop that employed journeymen painters and others. Most of the employees were Latino Mission residents. The business has temporarily relocated to far-off Bayview but its future is uncertain.

In the '80s, young people in the Mission District would sometimes refer to the 'hood jokingly as the "transmission" because of the many body shops, brake shops, and other vehicle repair places. In fact the vehicle repair industry provides skilled blue-collar jobs and employs a significant number of Latino workers. This industry is being forcibly downsized as loft or dot-com office developers buy properties out from under businesses.

Displacement thus works along several dimensions. People cannot find apartments they can afford to rent and their employers are displaced. For artists, affordable studio or rehearsal space disappears.

The luxury loft boom, followed by an explosion of multimedia office development, were left and right punches that drove up real estate prices and rents in the northeast Mission. By last year the city had allowed 1.75 million square feet of high-tech office space to emerge in the area, as the Mission was laced with 200 dot-coms.

The loft boom didn't happen without opposition. The Coalition for Jobs, Arts, and Housing (CJAH) was formed in reaction, lobbying for changes in the live/work law. But CJAH's efforts were thwarted by the pro-developer bias of the Board of Supervisors (the city council) and the intimida-

poster on freeway overpass, Valencia Street, San Francisco, by San Francisco Print Collective

tion tactics of the Residential Builders Association, headed by the thuggish Joe O'Donoghue (a former union organizer).

A more blunt form of protest was proposed by the Mission Yuppie Eradication Project, advocating sabotage of loft dweller's cars and squatting in newly built units. During the past year anger escalated to acts of arson, with the torching of two live/work buildings under construction.

The stealth invasion of dot-com offices was punctuated last April by two massive projects. Eikon Investments proposed converting the former National Guard Armory—a fortress-like presence on Mission Street—into 300,000 square feet of dot-com office space. Another developer, SKS (financed in part by the late William Simon, Reagan's Treasury secretary), proposed 160,000 square feet of high-rent multimedia and high-tech office space on an industrial site at 20th and Bryant, named "Bryant Square." SKS first had to evict the existing tenants, which included a small furniture factory, a sex-toy factory, a non-profit publisher and a sweater factory employing about 30 people (mostly Mission residents). A shed with cheap artist studio space was to be torn down. More than four dozen artists would be displaced—photographers, animators, videographers and designers. A young artist, one of the evictees, told me that people were "devastated" and having difficulty finding other space.

The Bryant Square project provoked widespread opposition in the Mission District, prompting a number of Mission District groups to form the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC). This initiative brought together the staffs of MEDA and MHDC and tenant-organizing groups such as Mission Agenda and St. Peter's Housing Committee, plus the Day Laborers' Program and PODER, a Latino environmental justice group. The primary aim of MAC has been to prevent the displacement of the working class, predominantly Latino, tenant population of the Mission District.

On June 26th more than a hundred people spoke before the Board of Supervisors in opposition to the Bryant Square project. Guys in suits predominated among those speaking for the project—mainly people with ties to dot-com office development in one way or another.

A handful of union leaders who had contracts with SKS or its subcontractors praised the developer, ignoring the displacement of blue collar jobs from the industrial zones and the effects of the dot-com boom on the ability of workers to find affordable housing.

Ignoring the Mission district's concerns, the Board of Supes gave the finger to the Mission by approving the Bryant Square project by a vote of 8 to 3.

Protest Grows, Evictions Continue

Two days later a boisterous crowd of 500 people filled a local school auditorium in the largest Mission District community meeting in years. The meeting had been called by MAC to confront city planning commissioners and the head of the planning department. The crowd chanted their support for a moratorium on office and live/work development in the Mission District.

As the movement grew during the summer, MAC's weekly meetings were drawing 70 to 80 activists. A de facto alliance had developed between progressive artists, on the one hand, and activist groups organizing amongst the segments of the Mission community most at risk of displacement—Latino working class families and low-income tenants. The posters of the San Francisco Print Collective and video shorts produced by activist videographers were some of the ways artists were able to use their skills for the

defense of the larger community.

On August 12th MAC led a thousand people on a *caminata*—billed as a walk "to defend the right to live in the Mission," touring sites of evictions or threatened evictions. Three days later about two thousand people attended an eviction party for Dancers Group/Footwork on 22nd Street, which was being forced out by a 500 percent rent increase. This space had been an Arthur Murray dance studio in the '50s and had been in continuous use for dance rehearsal since then. Three days later the police removed a group of people who had occupied the space in protest of the eviction.

Dancers Group was only one of a series of high-profile evictions, or impending evictions, of arts groups throughout the year which kept the issue of displacement on the front pages. Down the street at 24th and Mission another dance studio, Dance Mission, was facing eviction as the landlord sought to cash in on the dot-com boom.

The effect of high-tech conversions in the industrial zones was highlighted by the announcement that the owner of Downtown Rehearsal, a warehouse in a Bayview industrial area used for music rehearsal, was converting the building to a telecom switching station or server farm. The eviction, slated for September 25th, was a stunning blow to the city's music subculture, affecting 2,000 musicians.

The proposed Armory office conversion project came before the Planning Commission on September 7th. A large crowd of Mission activists and residents were present to speak against the project. During the hearing, Jonathan Youtt, the executive director of Cellspace (an arts center in a former machine shop in the northeast Mission) and a member of MAC, spoke a few seconds past the beep announcing the end of his allotted speaking time, as people often do. In this case the chair of the Commission summoned a sheriff who slammed Jonathan to the floor. This action provoked a near riot, with activists chanting "Shut it down!" A week later the project sponsor withdrew the office development proposal in response to the intense conflict their proposal had generated.

This and other protests at the Planning Commission had brought the actions of this obscure body to the front pages. The effect of this bad publicity was to weaken the credibility of the city government's handling of development issues.

Developers' Candidates Defeated

In an atmosphere of increasing polarization, leaders of CJAH and the Coalition of Community Housing Organizations (COCHO)—a consortium of non-profit housing developers—entered into behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Chamber of Commerce to work out some sort of compromise. With the backing of the city's elected officials, the for-profit developers judged that they had no reason to compromise. Ever responsive to this constituency, Mayor Willie Brown vetoed a compromise.

The CJAH and COCHO activists then wrote a citizens initiative, Proposition L. Prop L would end the "live/work" loophole by making lofts subject to the same rules as other housing construction. Office projects larger than 6,000 square feet would be banned in the Mission District and some adjacent industrial zones. Office developers would be required to provide some below-market-rate space for non-profits. MAC, CJAH and other groups collected 30,000 signatures in two-weeks to get L on the November ballot.

The framers of Proposition L were some of the same activists who had crafted the "growth-control" Proposition M, which passed in the mid-'80s. Proposition M limited the amount of office space built in the city to 950,000 square feet per year in order to prevent job growth from driving up housing prices. These framers of L hoped to build the same cross-class coalition of working class tenants and professional/managerial class environmentalists that had

continued on page 56

Al Lujan, on the side of Galleria de la Raza, Summer 2000

GOING PUBLIC

Holy Guacamole! We wuz warned,

as we elbowed our sibs
in those putt-putt rowboats (six-seaters)

chasing the other famblies around
(nucular two-parent famblies around)
a fake pristine lagoon

-at a nice safe uniform distance
-on (domestically manufactured) submersible tracks

chased and

serenaded
by a plague of mechanical
pests

popping up everywhichwhere,

helium voices at critical mass:

"...IT'S A SMALL, SMALL WORLD."

Warned with wax in our ears. . .

Just today I emailed another death threat to Malaysia,
and not 10 minutes later received a reply(!):

Comm and gut me, ashsole.

I wuz only kidding (he's my homie),
but those caroling castrati,
they meant business,

the graffiti on the wall deconstructed into global
MARKET SHARE.

Mickey, you knew it too.
(When you're colorblind flags look alike in the wind.)

You always thought big
for a rodent.

Big period, come to think.
In the Magic Kingdom Polaroid,
you were taller than dad!

Back then chips came in baskets
fried crisp (first one's free!)
and Carol Doda baked Silicone Valley
from scratch—
what the hell did we know?

So sorry to hear about you and the missus.
That took real old-school class,
blindsided outside
Le Cirque du Fromage,
bouquet of hand mikes in your pan:
"I wish Mr. Seinfeld and Minnie
much happiness."

Not me.
A vow is a vow.
Even in California.

Some days you're the only America we have left.

by klipschutz

PROPHET LOSS STATEMENT

He was just here, working the crowd, making predictions, and now like a set of keys—in neither pocket, nowhere. Like a set of keys that won't turn up. First our ball teams, then the corporate flagships, the postgrad nightlife yo-yo's and every four-piece that got signed. . . Maybe he got tired of our future perfect tense. And who could blame him? An Eleusinian riddle it's not—our offer fell short. A prophet has to eat, and with a career span of a quarterback he'd better sock something away. There's not much as sad as an ex-prophet pumping hands at a casino, or pimping divination tapes on cable. As for us, this slump can't last. And he's not the only human divining rod around, no sirree. Next time though, we should make a fuss—throw a parade, clean the streets, do the Lambada in full regalia for crying out loud. The teams, the headquarters, the wheat beer drinkers, they'll be back, and the bands after they get dropped. I can feel it in my bones.

by klipschutz

backed Proposition M.

As the November election approached, MAC and the city's dozens of grassroots political clubs, tenant, environmental and other groups networked and progressive support solidified for L and converged on a common slate of candidates for the Board of Supervisors. These were grassroots campaigns, based on volunteers passing out literature, making phone calls, postering. MAC was providing about 75 volunteers every weekend to help with the endorsed candidates.

Meanwhile, a powerful network of development interests and their political allies poured more than $5 million in "soft-money" into campaigns against L and against the pro-L candidates, paying for phone banks, and stuffing mailboxes throughout the city with glossy four-color propaganda. The campaign against L was the most expensive initiative fight in city history.

L was a complicated land-use measure. The anti-L propaganda had only to obfuscate and generate doubt. It was successful, with L narrowly defeated by about 1,300 votes. L lost heavily in the predominantly African-American Bayview district. The perception of L as a "slow-growth" measure worked against L in Bayview, where opponents framed the issue in terms of economic opportunities.

graphic by JRS

But the housing crisis, rising evictions and the development fights of the past year did affect the election of city supervisors. The activists' work paid off in the December 12th victories of all but one of the eight candidates supported by MAC and a liberal/radical alliance of grassroots activists.

The polarization around L helped to make clear who was willing to say "No" to the developers, speculators and their allies. Even more important was the direct militancy of hundreds of people—the occupations and blockades of buildings, people speaking out at Planning Commission hearings, marches, postering and graffiti and agitprop of all kinds. These actions kept the issue of displacement on the front pages and drove the debate in the city.

Dot-Com Bust

Since December, dozens of dot-coms in the city have crashed and burned. Venture capital is flowing elsewhere. The www.sfGirl.com website has moved from prowling the champagne-slated dot-com launch parties last summer to pink-slip parties for laid-off dot-commers. In SOMA, where dot-coms were forking over stock to landlords to get space last year, the vacancy rate has risen to 20 percent. Office rents have fallen from $72 a year per square foot in December to about $50.

Barring some global capitalist meltdown, the residential market is not likely to see the same decline that we have seen with office space rents. The unregulated commercial market is far more volatile, as businesses expand into space during upswings in the business cycle and then contract to reduce expenses in downturns.

People need a place to live even if they're currently unemployed. "I don't think we'll see prices go down," says Walter Ellingwood, executive vice-president of Rent Tech (an online rental agency). "Landlords are now more reluctant to raise rents, but they would still rather keep their units vacant than to rent it for less than what they were renting it for before."[8]

In some cases landlords' expectations have outrun the market, and they may lower their asking price to keep apartments from being vacant too long. With the dotcom collapse the vacancy rate in the city has risen from one percent to five percent. Despite this, a recent RentTech survey found that average rents for one-bedroom units had dropped a minuscule 1.3 percent since fall. In February the city Rent Board reported 166 evictions in the city, down only slightly from the previous year.

Future Direction?

As expected, the new Board of Supervisors has moved quickly to implement at least some of Prop L. A temporary ban was enacted against "live/work" lofts. MAC has proposed a short-term ban on high-tech office development in the Mission District, and a requirement of 25 percent affordable units for all new market-rate housing developments. The board is likely to approve this proposal when it comes up for a vote.

The intent of the proposed ban is to channel office development downtown. But this will not end the pressure on the Mission District housing supply. The Mission is only an eight-minute ride from the financial district.

Despite the dot-com shakeout, the Bay Area remains a powerful center of computer, bio-tech and Internet-related industries. The dot-com bust may herald a recession this year, but more growth is likely in the next expansion.

Market forces are working to change the demographics of the Mission, apartment by apartment, building by building. Private ownership of the neighborhood's buildings by people other than those people living in them enables the owners to evict tenants under the Ellis Act and raise rents of vacant units to whatever they can get.

This displacement is not inevitable but an effective solution requires that we get to the root of the problem.

The problem is not a lack of sites in the city for new housing. A city Planning Department report notes that there are under-utilized parcels with space for 60,000 dwelling units under current zoning.[9]

Getting to the root of the problem means attacking the ownership structure of real estate. Some local activist are proposing community land trusts as a new model for affordable housing[10]. A community land trust is a democratic community membership organization that would enable tenants to convert their buildings into cooperatives, or develop new coop buildings. The land trust would retain ownership of the land under the buildings, to take it permanently off the market. The land trust model poses the possibility of community self-management of real estate development.

A weakness of public housing programs in the U.S. has been the absence of control by residents over the buildings where they live. Cooperatives empower residents and give them a stake in the community.

A satisfactory solution requires an expansion of housing supply at moderate prices. Building more dwelling units means making the city a denser place. This will require organizing to get around neighborhood NIMBYs who often use environmental arguments to try to block or downsize multi-unit housing developments.

A program that is far-reaching enough to make a dent in the housing crisis won't be cheap—hundreds of millions of dollars in funding will be needed. New tax streams will be required. The city has the powers to borrow and tax that can finance this sort of program. But it is not likely to use those powers for the benefit of the ordinary people of the city without a major movement from below. Those who are at risk of being displaced, who want to stay, and all those who want to preserve the city's social and cultural diversity, need to take the initiative, to craft solutions that address the real roots of the crisis. ?

Notes

1. Cassi Feldman, "Landlords don't let up", *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, Apr. 4, 2001, and Victor Miller, "Rent hikes may oust 100 tenants", *New Mission News*, Apr., 2001
2. "Venture Capital Epicenter," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 3, 2000
3. "Demand High for Offices in S.F.", *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 10, 2000
4. "San Francisco Housing Inventory," S.F. Planning Dept., 1999
5. "Apartment rents soar", *San Jose Mercury News*, August 26, 2000
6. "No Sign Housing Market Is Slowing," *S.F. Chronicle*, Mar. 4, 2001
7. M. Toby Levine, "Planning our history and the history of planning in the Mission", *New Mission News*, Oct. 2000
8. Quoted in "Dot-coms' demise could alleviate rent problems," *San Francisco Examiner*, Dec. 29, 2000
9. San Francisco City Planning Commission, Resolution No. 14861, 1999
10. See http://www.sflandtrust.org.

I Live in the Past: The Rent is Cheaper!

by Zoe Noe

I used to think sometimes, after visiting a place like New York, how thankful I was to have wound up in San Francisco. New York seemed the kind of place you'd get buried alive if you weren't careful and didn't have a plan, but San Francisco afforded me the chance to spend years basically bumbling around without a clue about what I might eventually want to do. I had a poignant moment last summer when we needed to fill a room for a couple months. No friends were expressing interest, so we posted an ad on *craigslist*.

I was unprepared for the response. The phone ringing off the hook. Hundreds of emails. The answering machine tape filled up within the hour. I got home from work to find that my roommate had told everyone who called to just come on over that evening between 8 and 10 and take a look at the room.

During our insane impromptu open house, with my attention flitting from one desperate seeker to another (and some who were just taking in the scene, I got into a conversation with a 22 year old, who had just moved out here from St. Louis. He reminded me a lot of me when I first arrived. I was 22, from the Midwest: gentle, soft-spoken, full of hope and curiosity. The biggest difference was that he came with $4,000 saved up, Internet job contacts arranged ahead of time; yet he had been couch-surfing for months in San Mateo, chasing after that elusive place in the city. I couldn't help thinking how different it was for me when I came here in 1981, fresh off a Greyhound with $300 in my pocket.

I was anything but focused in those days. In my first couple of years here, I think I had close to 30 jobs; some lasting only a matter of hours, others dragging on for several months. (See "Lose Jobs Now, Ask Me How!" in *PW*#17.) One week it might be conducting telephone surveys, another substitute teaching at a day program for retarded adults. (More like glorified babysitting; it didn't seem to matter that I lacked formal qualification. I showed them a few "letters of recommendation" that I'd instructed a classroom of 3rd graders to write for me on April Fool's Day at a Catholic school in the Mission District.)

Job security was not a concept I could relate to. But then my rent was only $100 a month for a tiny converted laundry room with a loft in the back of a huge, rambling flat on Haight St. As many as 12 people lived there, all sharing the same phone line with no answering machine, amazingly enough. Hardly anyone had a regular job, quite a few were unemployed, and some dealt drugs to get by.

If you were broke it was easy to scam on MUNI. (We had a complete set of the color-coded transfers they were using at the time—we'd find out what transfer they were using that day, then consult our collection, or paste like-colored transfers together to make them longer. Some months we'd be styling with color xeroxed fast passes. I went two whole years once without paying fare!)

Food stamps were easier to get then, and there were numerous soup kitchens, plus the fun free feast on Saturdays at the KaliFlower Kollective that was both soup kitchen and cabaret—very theatrical! Failing that, one of the roommates would often show up with one of those huge plastic bags filled with day-old bagels.

Being so sketchily employed meant having time to spare. I could put in lots of time on *Processed World,* and do the street theatre/magazine hawking every Friday lunchtime in the Financial District. There was time to indulge flights of whim—take a Super-8 film class at City College, sew a rug out of carpet samples, or just walk in the park.

There is still the occasional sweet deal that manages to slip through the cracks in the real estate market (though usually it means you need to have lived here a long time to even know about it, and then you can never move again). About six years ago I was fortunate to move into a revolving household which had held the same lease since the mid 1980s. The landlord was a cranky old Irishman who took care of his body like he took care of his buildings, which is to say largely by neglect.

The Dept. of Inspections kept trying to nail him, but he always ignored them or told them to fuck off. I found an inspection report from 1985 urging replacement of the back stairs, which still hadn't been done when he passed away in 2000 (at the height of the dot com juggernaut on the city's neighborhoods). Oh, he patched them up numerous times; some oddly-spaced planks pounded in here, a little Fix-All there.

He would usually shuffle through with a kind word, and he kept the rent cheap. I'm not even sure if he knew just what market rents were, as his were about 10 years behind the times, and most years he would forget to raise it.

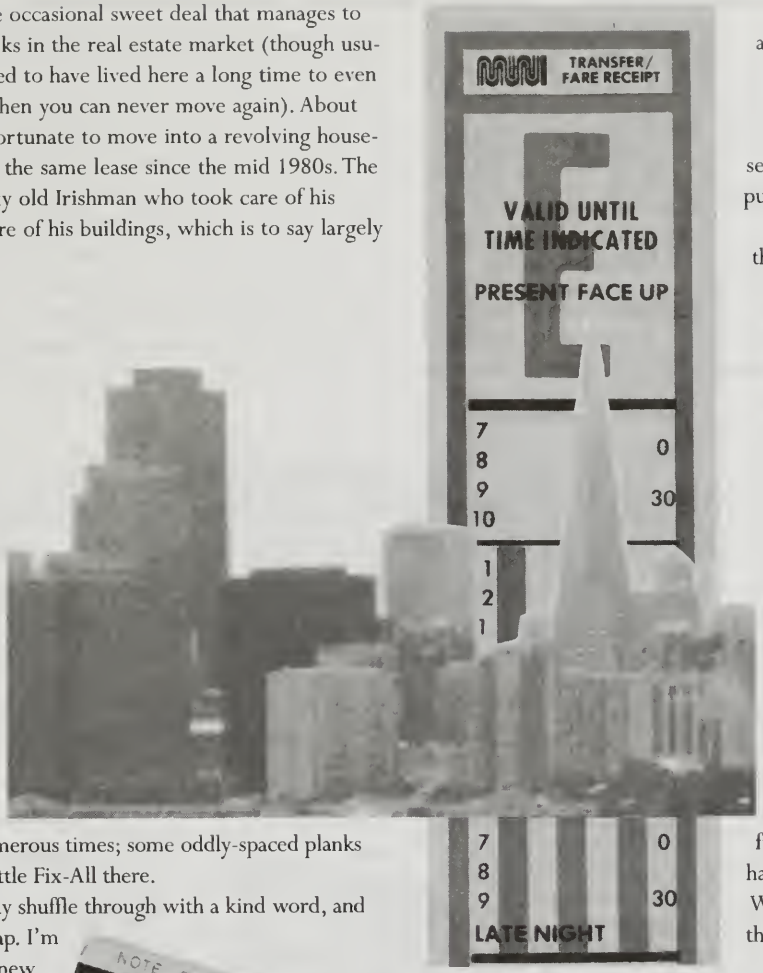
Legends abounded about his generosity. When our friend Tyrrell first went to meet him and see the apartment, she showed up in her peasant dress and lively Irish smile, and he was so charmed that he rented the place to her and told this pair of uptight yuppies to beat it. Or another time, later, when a bunch of extra folks were crashing at the apartment, Tyrrell got nervous that he might find out how many people were staying at the flat. He did find out—and he actually commended her for taking in all these extra people and putting a roof over their heads—and even gave her back $100 of the rent!

The Dept. of Inspections finally caught up with him after years of being deflected, and started tightening the screws.

After he ignored another hearing, they seized his three houses and put them in court-appointed receivership. I think that's what killed him. His health, which never had been robust in the time that we knew him, suddenly declined precipitously. Cancer spread like wildfire, and he was dead within three weeks.

The house has been in a strange state of limbo since then—which has been advantageous for us despite the lingering uncertainty. Our rent has stayed the same. We pay it to the receiver, who has ostensibly used it to fund the repairs that Mike had been so delinquent on. We've been satisfied to see the repairs drag on and on, since the building can't really go on the open market until it's out of receivership, and the San Francisco housing market has cooled considerably.

Now it seems that San Francisco has become much more like New York, and a young person arriving today hardly has the same options I did; to land in San Francisco with only $300 and know everything will be alright. A luxury of unstructured time that San Francisco used to be so generous in giving. (It's weird to think of it as a luxury!) The San Francisco I'm eulogizing has completely disappeared, but you have to be damn lucky to find it.



Zoe photo by Joni Lyn

HOT UNDER THE COLLAR

Notes from a Help Desk

I want to give a small example of something that happened to me this week at work (I am a help desk worker and occasional network admin) for a General Electric subsidiary ("they're the worst Generals of all you know!"). The help desk is scheduled to be partially outsourced to India. The company is outsourcing Level 1 support, mostly initial call taking and opening of cases. This decision has basically been made and now they have a project team to 'study the feasibility', i.e. justify the move. The jackass leading this project doesn't know a computer from an Etch-a-Sketch and has no idea about what kind of work we do, our workload, etc. Nor does he really care.

All he wants is to get rid of a few of us, and speed up response and resolution times. i.e. work faster, produce more, then we can really prove we didn't need you!

One of the people I work with, who lives in a fairly well off suburb and who is a sort of All-American blonde ex-jock, with maybe some Green Party leanings, looks at all of us and says "Let's get the bastard in here for a week. Make him start by trying to do his job as we field all the phone calls, run around, do projects, etc. Then after two days, let's make him answer a call an hour and have him still try to do his other job. Then let's leave him alone to answer calls, as happens to us on a fairly frequent basis, while the rest of us go fix problems." So far, he just wants him to taste the pain. But then he says, "Better yet, let's bring down one system everyday so he can see what we really have to face from time to time. We'll bring down a different server each day. That should fucking teach him!"

Now, will we do it? Pro'lly not at that level. But will this guy get a roasting while he is there? You bet. Regardless of

cartoon continued from page 42

Mike Mosher

the conscious political beliefs of the people I work with (mostly pro-company), they are ready to challenge the company suck-up and cause problems in production in order to protect themselves. Would anyone see this if they did not work on this helpdesk? No. Will it cost GE some money and stick it to this management jerk? Yes. Is it class struggle? You bet. Is it enough to overthrow capital? Of course not. But it did open a discussion, once again, of what the company is about, about what it means to be a worker, about profit over our needs, etc. My co-workers, with no intervention from me, opened a space for contesting capital in some small way and that also opened a space for discussion. Could I have planned that? Probably not.

Every smart organizer I know, whether unionist or communist, recognizes that you can't force this kind of thing or create it. That may fly in the face of Leninist and unionist ideas of leadership, but that is also why so many 'militants' leave these organizations and why they can only rarely attract creative political people who stay.

It opens different ideas about what it means to be a revolutionary, a communist. It means not pretending to lead. Not pretending to have a worked out strategy and set of tactics. Rather, what we bring are ideas, ideas that we try to offer as ways of understanding why such and such happened; that it will happen again and why; and how there are ways out. In other words, ways to change the world that reside in our collective self-determination, and not in the right party or the right program. Walking we listen. Or as they used to say, you gotta walk a mile in her shoes.

If we do our job, then we respond to struggles, help them clarify both during and after, and we try to act personally and live in a way that is worth emulating, that is rich in life and struggle. The Leninists I know are usually awful examples of human lives. They are the most over-worked gerbils in a wheel I know and so many of them are so damn boring. There is a great value to the Situationist critique of 'militantism' (not that we can do nothing, but it changes the scope and nature of our interventions.)

Anyway, that's a bit of a tangent and too one-sided, but it is too often left out. Revolution is about living differently, not as isolated individuals, but in struggle. I am a communist not because I

have a love of the oppressed, but because I am oppressed and the only way out is collectively.

Yours in struggle,

Chris W., Chicago, IL., USA

POSTSCRIPT: The management hack never showed up, but some systems mysteriously, and not so mysteriously, did experience problems. Due to a gas company workers' strike, the scabs doing tasks cut MCI's data lines in Chicago, taking down our phone and data for a whole day. Also, some changes were made to the servers that locked a large number of people out of the system. Who made that change? No one knows. Gremlins?

On the Lines at York University

Fighting Neoliberalism in Post-Secondary Education

On January 11, 2001, a 78 day strike by teaching, research and graduate assistants (TAs/RAs/GAs) at York University ended. The strike at Canada's third largest university, the longest such in Canadian history, was different from many in the postsecondary sector in that it resulted in a fairly substantial victory for the strikers. Through years of effort, the unionized York University workers managed to secure a good contract. A loss would have had devastating effects on post-secondary education workers across Canadian campuses. In broader terms, in order for the neoliberal agenda of privatization and marketization of post-secondary education to be fully implemented, defenders of accessible quality education—of which Local 3903 has been in the forefront in Canada—must be brought to heel or, even better (from the view of the bosses), eliminated entirely.

The proposals made by York administration were typical of the corporatization drive in other public service sectors: privatization, reduced job security and reductions in wages and benefits. The political character of the strike and its importance in the battle against neoliberal marketization of post-secondary education were reflected in two of the major issues being fought over in the strike: tuition indexation and those of job security and promotion.

The union, fighting for principles of universality and accessibility, was committed to tuition relief for future as well as current TAs and GA/RAs. Tuition indexation, a fee rebate which increases dollar-for-dollar with tuition, offers some protection against the tuition increases which have eroded the already limited accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada. Current union TAs had this protection but the university was seeking to eliminate it for future members through a "grandparent" clause. Losing indexation in the only local to have it would have been a crushing blow for locals with contracts due such as at Carleton (Ottawa), and McMaster (Hamilton). Since full-time registration is a requirement for holding a TAship or GA/RAship, tuition works as a ready-made mechanism for management to take back any gains workers might win. In this way the university works much like a company store: no matter how much wages are increased, workers always find themselves owing something more.

The tuition requirement also represents a discriminatory employment arrangement which distinguishes TAs and RA/GAs from all other York employees. Other university workers, whether professors, secretaries or maintenance staff enjoy free tuition at York for themselves and their families. The same tuition waiver holds for TAs at most universities in the US.

After tuition, and even with the protection offered by indexation, TAs at York are left with an income of $9,749.28 (Canadian) per year, substantially below the Toronto poverty line of $17,132. The situation for RA/GAs is even worse. York offered them a minimum of $4,500, not even enough to pay the $5,184.72 tuition costs. In addition, all graduate students since 1996/97 have been required to pay tuition in the summer even if they are finished with course work, which amounts to the world's most expensive library card.

The enormous tuition increases of recent years have been permitted, indeed encouraged, by federal government cuts to education funding and at the provincial level through deregulation of tuition fees for graduate and professional programs. At the same time the budgets of research funding bodies have suffered reductions and freezes. Most schools, including York, have eliminated graduate post-residence fees which previously protected graduate students from paying full fees once their coursework was finished. This has had a disastrous impact on students as it represents a doubling of previous fees for each year except the first in programs which can take over six years to complete. It has also played nicely into the hands of university administrators as the pressures on students to find off-campus work to make up the tuition increases has lengthened completion times for many students. The administration's refusal to offer livable wages suggests a commitment to student poverty, debt and, inevitably, decreased enrollment by students from low-income backgrounds. Another major plank in the corporatization agenda in post-secondary education has been movement away from secure tenure-track positions towards increased reliance on contract faculty. Efforts by university administrations to keep contract faculty working without even minimal job security provisions is a key part of the requirement to "flexibilize" labour as campuses are made to fit the lean production models of other sectors. Contract faculty at York currently have to apply for their jobs every four to eight months regardless of seniority. Even those who have taught a course for 20 years have to re-apply to teach it, with no guarantee that they will be rehired. To protect against this, Local 3903 fought for an

increase in the number of conversions of contract faculty to tenure stream.

The university's intransigence speaks to the political character of the negotiations and suggests that the administration believed it had powerful support for its actions. The administration hired a Chief Negotiator from an infamous union-busting section of the Heenan Blakie law firm. The same negotiator worked for administrations during faculty strikes against York and Trent Universities.

Interestingly, York President Lorna Marsden sits on the Boards of Directors for corporations which donated over $28,000 to the same Conservative Ontario government which deregulated graduate fees and is constructing a bill to allow private universities in the province. Her political connections run even deeper, as she is the former Vice-President of the Liberal Party of Canada, the very party which set the stage for tuition deregulation by cutting education transfers to the provinces.

The York Board of Governors consists primarily of corporate Directors and CEOs. For example, one Governor authored a 1996 report recommending that the Provincial government deregulate tuition fees, a proposal which has been given life in a Bill currently [March, 2001] going through readings in the Ontario legislature. Another Board member is CEO and Chair of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, which administers student loans and profits from the increased student debts related to costly tuition.

Solidarity/Picket Strength

The only way that strikers were able to withstand the assaults by strike breakers, theft of fire barrels and safety gates, threats of arrests and a government sponsored forced ratification vote was through militance on the picket line and tremendous solidarity given by supporters on and off of campus. Local 3903 has a long history as an activist local, forming flying squads to support other unions and community groups and doing much support work for militant organizations like the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP). During the strike this solidarity was returned tremendously.

Autoworkers provided food to picketers nearly every day of the strike; steelworkers and high school teachers showed up to strengthen lines when the university president threatened to bus students in; undergraduate students organized occupations and rallies against the administration; student groups like the Iranian Students' Association brought snacks and cheerful greetings; university workers showed up from other cities to walk the lines; day care workers — themselves enduring a six month strike (now seven and counting) and OCAP, always ready when threats of cops were on the lips of administrators — all of these people came out and showed the kind of solidarity that is necessary to win.

Thankfully there was a consistent core of militants who took the time to confront union bureaucrats over strategies and tactics and to ensure the autonomy of pickets and the priorities of rank-and-file decision-making on the lines. When picket captains cheered cop actions against scabs, militants reminded them that the cops are not our friends. When union leaders warned against trying to stop strikebreakers from jumping the line or chastized strikers for getting in front of jumpers, militants reminded them what a picket line is all about and made it clear that such reprimands were unacceptable.

It's a fact, usually denied or unnoticed by union bureaucrats, that strikes are won on the picket line. At York, militance and strength on the line made the difference even in the face of less than confident union leaders who too often seemed to think that politeness and kindness towards strikebreakers would carry the day.

by Jeff Shantz

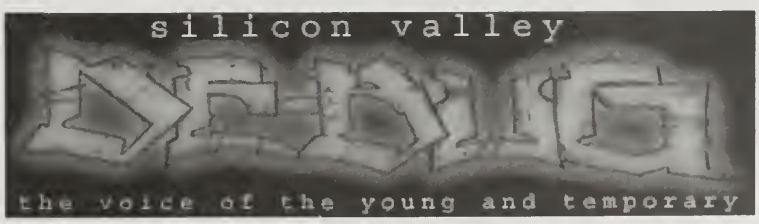
Silicon Valley DeBug

Thankfully, not all of the sharp young workers in the new economy bought into the nonsense that high-tech is a benign industry, free from pollution and labor abuses. A group calling itself "Silicon Valley DeBug: The Voice of the Young and Temporary," had those illusions shattered years ago, thanks to temp work on high-tech assembly lines and in chemical-suffused chipmaking "clean rooms."

These days, the group is busy posting tales of toil on their website at http://www.siliconvalleydebug.com, upstaging the complainers on http://www.fuckedcompany.com with stories from some truly fucked companies. Read the work-diary of Shana White, a 20-year old temporary receptionist at Bell Micro Products in San Jose, whose 40-year old mother assembles printed circuit boards in the back room. Over lunch, her mother routinely complains of chemical spills and headaches from fumes and fluxes, many of which contain known neurotoxins. An immigrant from Nicaragua, the mother is just happy to have a job.

Read also the story of a blood-and-cyanide packer for Abbot Labs; an HP Laserjet assembler working for Manpower; and a clean-room worker kicking a crank habit — yet another incidental exposure from chip manufacturing's 12-hour shifts. Clean chemistry, indeed.

by Jim Fisher



The Great Bicycle Protest of 1896

The 1890s popular movement for Good Roads, pushed most ardently by bicyclists, is of note for several reasons. Primarily the fight for better conditions for bicycling unknowingly set the stage for the rise of the private automobile. Within a decade of the big demonstrations detailed here, better roads and improved tire technology combined with breakthroughs in internal combustion to launch the car industry. Obviously the private automobile has played a pivotal role in transferring the cost of transportation to the individual (thereby intensifying financial needs, summed up in the absurd conundrum of "driving to work to make money to pay for my car to drive to work"). It has also been central to the speeding up of daily life, especially in the sprawl of the post World War II era. (Of course if you're stuck in a traffic jam during every commute, you may question how "speeded up" the car has made your life). In any case, the colorful popular demonstrations that filled San Francisco's decrepit streets in the 1890s find a contemporary echo in the monthly Critical Mass bike rides that started in San Francisco in 1992 and spread across the world. The unintended consequences of the 19th century popular mobilization for Good Roads provide important food for thought as we engage in political movements of resistance and imagination.

—C.C.

by Hank Chapot

The bicycle took America by storm in the last part of the 1800s, becoming an object of pleasure and symbol of progress. Enthusiasts hailed the bicycle as "a democratizing force for good, the silent steed of steel, the modern horse." The Gilded Age was the Bicycle Age. Millions of new bicyclists were soon demanding good roads to accompany their embrace of the new-fangled means of transportation.

San Francisco, though the third wealthiest city in the nation, was an aging boomtown. Streets were muddy or dusty, full of horseshit, and increasingly crisscrossed with a hodgepodge of streetcar tracks and cable slots, creating an unpredictable, hazardous mess. The city's old dirt roads and cobblestone thoroughfares were originally laid down for a village of 40,000 were now serving a metropolis of 360,000.

On Saturday July 25th of 1896, after months of organizing by cyclists and good roads advocates, residents took to the streets in downtown San Francisco, inspired by the possibilities of the nation's wonderful new machine, the bicycle. Enjoyed by perhaps 100,000 spectators, the parade ended in unanimously approved resolutions in favor of good roads, and a near riot at Kearny and Market. The next day's headlines in the *San Francisco Call* captured the rally's success: **"San Francisco Bicycle Riders Disciples Of Progress"; "A Most Novel And Magnificent Wheel Pageant Did Light Up Folsom Street."**

Since the 1880's, riders across the country had lobbied for access to the streets. Increasingly organized, their mission was political and social as cycling became a way of life. Bicyclists demonstrated in large American cities, including Chicago, where wheelmen and wheelwomen held riding exhibitions and mass meetings, forcing the city to withdraw a rail franchise for a west end boulevard. The bicycle's popularity exploded with the Safety Bicycle (circa 1885) that eliminated the danger of riding the giant "high wheelers." The "Safety" had many of the innovations of contemporary bicycles. The invention of the pneumatic tire in 1889 cushioned the ride. Bicycle ownership exploded in the 1890's among all classes, shop owners purchased delivery bikes and businesses purchased fleets.

Yet, animosity toward the bicycle grew with its popularity. Cities passed ordinances restricting hours and setting speed limits. Riders responded by using their organized "wheel clubs" that in addition to political activism, promoted social events, elected officers, ran competitions, sponsored dances and country rides. Many had clubhouses in the city and ran "wheel hotels" in the countryside. The women of the Falcon Cycling Club ran one in an abandoned streetcar near Ocean Beach.

Through the League of American Wheelmen (L.A.W.), founded in 1880 in Rhode Island, cyclists across the country joined the movement. Bicycle organizing was already in full swing by 1887 when the *New York Times* editorialized ". . . since bicycles have been declared vehicles by the courts, they should be declared by statute entitled to the privileges and subject to the duties of wheeled traffic." As local agitation grew into a national movement, the L.A.W. became the umbrella organization for the wider good roads movement. Bicycle agitation spread globally and locally. Candidates for local office found that unless they supported good roads, they stood little chance against well-organized L.A.W. chapters.

The San Francisco Movement

The 1896 protest was tied to the campaign to pass a City Charter that among other changes, would nullify unused

The Call

San Francisco

VOLUME LXXX.—NO. 26. SAN FRANCISCO, SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 26, 1896—THIRTY-TWO PAGES. PRICE FIVE CENTS.

SAN FRANCISCO BICYCLE RIDERS AS DISCIPLES OF PROGRESS.

Enthusiastic Outpouring of Devotees of the Wheel Who Are Determined on Improving the City's Thoroughfares—Fully One Hundred Thousand Spectators Viewed the Parade.

A Brilliant Section of the Parade as It Appeared on Post Street After the Start.

Some of the Bicycle Club Emblems That Are Familiar in San Francisco.

street rail franchises. New franchises would have to be running in six months. The charter was a core project of the Southside Merchants Association, and the cyclery owners of the Cycle Board of Trade were unanimous in support. The protest offered a chance to rally San Francisco to the cause.

People wanted abandoned rail tracks removed, pavement between the rails and reduction of the height of the slot. They wanted Market Street sidewalks reduced and overhead wires put underground when streets were re-built—common practices in eastern cities. Cyclists risked crashing upon the raised steel slot in the roadbed through which cable cars gripped the cable, or slipping on the unpaved trackways. Most cyclists hated "the slot" and the street railways that ran on it. Companies were killing old franchises to maintain their monopolies but leaving the tracks in place.

Mission District bicyclists wanted access to downtown. Folsom Street was the main boulevard through the Mission and cyclists worked diligently for pavement from 29th to Rincon Hill. The July 25th rally would celebrate the opening of a newly paved portion. They also wanted a road from their neighborhood to Golden Gate Park, and because thousands were riding there at night, they wanted illumination with electric lights like Central Park.

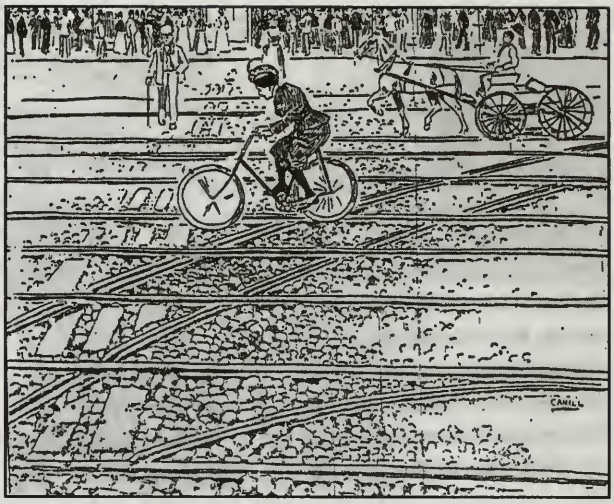
The *San Francisco Call*, a major supporter of the movement, interviewed owners and managers of some of the numerous cyclerys in town, who spoke as one. Each was a sponsor of "the agitation" and each would close early on Saturday. In San Francisco that July, their demand was "Repave Market Street," their motto, "Where There Is a Wheel, There Is a Way."

A five-year wheelman named McGuire, speaking for the South Side Improvement Club stated: "The purpose for the march is three-fold; to show our strength, to celebrate the paving of Folsom Street and to protest against the conditions of San Francisco pavement in general and of Market Street in particular. If the united press of this city decides that Market Street must be repaved, it will be done in a year." Asked if southsiders were offended that the grandstand would be north of Market, McGuire exclaimed, "Offended! No! We want the north side to be waked up. We south of Market folks are lively enough, but you people over the line are deader than Pharaoh!"

Meeting at the Indiana Bicycle Company the Thursday before the parade, cyclists discussed their greatest opponent, the Market Street Railway, whom they blamed for the sorry condition of their main thoroughfare. "A person takes his life into his own hands when he rides on that street" someone said, accusing the streetcar company of sprinkling the street when many wheelmen and women were heading home from work. Another predicted that "with good roads, urban workers would ride to their places of business . . . a good thing because it would cut into the income of the tyrannical street railroad." They had a friend in the Street Department, a wheelman himself, who promised that all obstacles would be removed from the route Saturday and streets would not be sprinkled.

The Emporium Department Store paved Market Street at 5th at it's own expense, using tarred wooden blocks laid over the old basalt as an example of what Market Street should look like. Unfortunately, much of the Emporium's efforts would be undone during the commotion later on Saturday evening.

Several politicians had been invited. "Most sent letters assuring their friendly disposition toward the wheelmen." With the appointment of so many vice-presidents to the parade committee, including the Mayor, two Congressmen, both Senators and the City Supervisors, political notice seemed assured. From the Cycle Board of Trade and the Southside Improvement Association, the call went out to bicyclists and "all progressive and public-spirited citizens to participate."



The Great Bicycle Demonstration July 25, 1896

Thousands of spectators from "the less progressive sections of the city" were expected. The decorations committee had provided 8,000 Chinese lanterns, distributed by the Indiana Bicycle Company. Cyclists were encouraged to decorate their wheels, citizens along the route to decorate their properties, with prizes offered for the finest display.

By early evening, homes and businesses along Folsom Street were ablaze with firelight as the committee made its rounds. Businesses decorated their storefronts; one was covered with colorful bunting and flags surrounded by lanterns while a homeowner used carriage lanterns, to cast colored lights onto the street. The Folsom Street Stables were a mass of torchlight.

Promoters had failed to get electric lights strung the length of Folsom Street, but the mansions, businesses and walk-ups "were not content to burn a single hallway light as usual but were illuminated basement to garret a full stream of gaslight in every room commending a view of the street with an abundance of Chinese lanterns strung from eaves to buildings across the street." Calcium lights cast the brightest glow but many windows "were lit in the old fashioned style, rows of candles placed one above the other." Every window bulged with cheering spectators.

The divisions gathered on Shotwell Street in their finest riding attire and street clothes, or their most gruesome costumes. The largest (from the L.A.W.) dressed as street-laborers. The Bay City Wheelmen, YMCA Cyclers, the Pacific, Liberty, Olympia, Call and Pathfinders were all represented. Members wore insignias of their affiliations. "Unattached friends" were invited to join a favorite division.

A few men rode in drag, one "in the togs of a Midway *Plaisance* maiden," another as an old maid. Uncle Sam rode in bloomers next to a down-home hayseed. There were meaner stereotypes: Sitting Bull and Pocahontas; a man in bloomers mocking "the new women;" one in blackface; one "imitating a Chinese in silks and slippers."

Bicycles were adorned with ribbons and painted canvas with lanterns strung from the handlebars or from poles above—"a sea of Chinese lanterns as far as the eye could see." One was decorated with a stack of parasols, another intertwined with flowers and garlands, others "revolving discs of light guided by mystic men in garbs of flame." A few rode the old-fashioned "high-wheelers." Tandems were joined to create a pirate ship, while another pair carried "a little chariot from which a child drove through the air two beautiful little bicycles." Many carried cowbells that "turned the night into pandemonium."

Clubs from as far away as Fremont, Vallejo, Santa Rosa and San Jose lined up alongside worker's divisions, letter carriers, soldiers from the Presidio and sailors from Angel Island. *The Call* stated cheerfully, "Though most of the column was composed of clubs, there was no restraining line to prevent the participation of individuals. Everyone was welcome to the merrymaking."

One club however, did not attend. For three years, the Colored Cycle Club of Oakland had been seeking membership in the L.A.W. Three days earlier they were again denied membership. Nevertheless, the next day's *Sunday Call* would exclaim, "Bicyclists of every age, race, sex and color—bicyclists from every stratum of cycledom, the scorcher to the hoary headed patriarch . . . turned out for the great demonstration in favor of good streets."

The parade president had invited liverymen and teamsters to join the march, and though many southsiders had to rent horses, they planned to "pay a silent tribute" later at the reviewing stand near City Hall, "to that noble and patient animal, for he is still with us."

The Parade Begins

Late in starting, the Grand Marshall "hid his blushes in the folds of a huge sash of yellow silk" and called to march. Orders had been passed down that candles not be lighted until commanded, but the streets were ablaze as the horse-

men began. Fireworks filled the air and the new pavement hummed beneath the wheels. When the order to march finally came down the line, the glowing lanterns bobbed and weaved above the crowds.

The children's division led with the Alpha Ladies' Cycling Club in their first public ride. It had taken some persuasion to induce the Alphas to attend, yet the women's clubs were greeted with enthusiasm. The procession quickly stretched ten blocks and began to splinter—"literally a sea of humanity." The children and a few others dropped out at 8th Street, but the majority of cyclists pressed on, all the while "good-naturedly" bombarded by Roman candles. Upwards of 100,000 San Franciscans "watched the energetic wheelmen speed upon their whirling way."

By 8th Street, the cyclists were forced to dismount and push their wheels through a narrow strip above the rail tracks as the police began to worry about the "overenthusiastic crowds." The disturbance caused by the streetcars and the narrowness of the space available in the center of the street began to separate the bicyclists.

At Market, streetcars were "so burdened, their sides, roof and platform sagged perceptively." The crowd filled the street and only a few lanterns appeared above the crowds. Riders had planned to dismount and push for three blocks to show "the pavement is too bad for any self-respecting wheel to use" but ended up pushing most of the way.

Approaching Powell and Market, "the cyclists encountered a surging mass of humanity." Bells of a dozen trapped streetcars added to the chaos. When the number 21 car got too close to one division, some in the crowd began rocking it, attempting to overturn it.

Not surprisingly, some came with destructive intent, including, "an army of small boys from the Mission who ruthlessly smashed and stole the lanterns." The *Chronicle* reported, "They stole them by the score and those they couldn't pluck they smashed with sticks . . . others filled respectable spectators with dismay by their language."

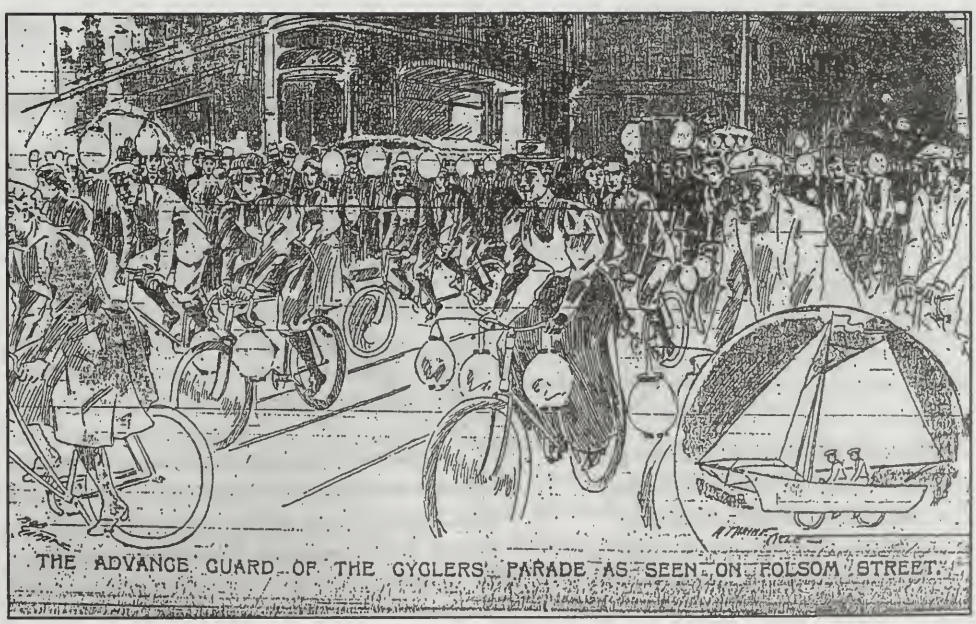
Before the last cyclists had passed up Market Street a larger disturbance broke out among the spectators. "The hoodlums began a warfare upon the streetcars," according to the *Chronicle*. People were observed pulling up the Emporium's tarred blocks and throwing them beneath the streetcar wheels and at the cars directly, breaking windows while passengers cowered inside. When a car stopped, they attempted to overturn it by rocking it and when one got away, they fell upon the next.

At City Hall, both sides of Van Ness were "black with people." When the firewagon finally appeared, well after 9:30 p.m., it was greeted by a great roar. At the grandstand in the gathering fog, accompanied by bursting fireworks, the crowd cheered as each new division straggled in. On the reviewing stand sat many important San Franciscans; a Senator, a Congressmen, several Supervisors and the fine ladies and gentlemen of San Francisco's southside community.

A gigantic bonfire blazed in City Hall Square, another burned at Fell and Van Ness; fires glowed around the plaza. Behind the stage hung a huge banner lighted by the ubiquitous lanterns stating simply, "FINISH FOLSOM STREET." Under a festoon of lights, speeches of "varying qualities of oratory" received tremendous applause.

Julius Kahn, an enthusiastic wheelman, preached good roads and great civilizations. Senator Perkins promised pavement to the Park, and lighting too. The next speaker claimed the bicycle had solved the age-old question that perplexed both Plato and Mayor Sutro, who rarely left the Heights in the evening: "How to get around in the world!"

Although the disturbance at Kearny and Market was not completely out of character for San Francisco, the cyclists, to say the least, were not amused. Meeting Sunday after the parade, argument raged. Someone offered "Chief Crowley is dissembling when he declares he could not put enough men out for a bicycle parade when he can spare men enough to preserve order at a prize-fight" and a Mr.



THE ADVANCE GUARD OF THE CYCLERS' PARADE AS SEEN ON FOLSOM STREET.

Wynne agreed. "They are perfectly able to be out in force around boxing night at the Pavilion when some 'plug-uglies' are engaged in battering each other."

The final resolution declaring victory was approved unanimously. "The parade exceeded any similar events held west of Chicago and the objects of the demonstration have been fully accomplished and we have aroused the sympathy and secured the support of the well-wishers of San Francisco."

They decried the inefficiency of the Police Department and especially condemned the Market Street Railroad Company's "outrageous, high-handed actions in operating and insolently intruding their cars into the ride, thus breaking into the route and materially interfering with its success."

A vote of thanks was extended to all who participated in the Street Department for the fine manner in which it had prepared the road.

The Sunday papers estimated five thousand riders had taken part. The *Examiner* was effusive: "it was the greatest night the southsiders have had since the first plank road was laid from the city gardens into the chaparral and sand dunes where 16th Street now stretches it's broad road." The *Call* heralded "An Enthusiastic Outpouring of Devotees of The Wheel."

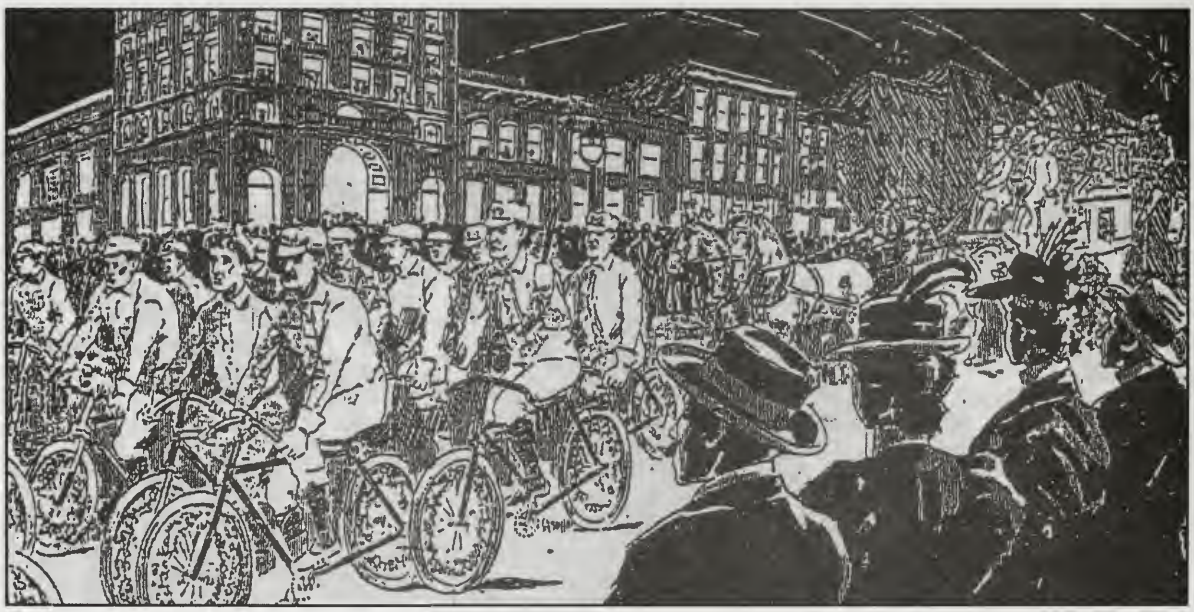
That Sunday morning, the *Examiner* sent a reporter to Golden Gate Park to count cyclists, who had exclusive use of the drives. He recorded the number of women and men, types of wheels and clothing styles. "The men riding in the early morning, erect and never exceeding six miles per hour, wore knickerbockers, sack coats and scotch caps." These were "the best type of cyclist." Later, "the hard riding element appeared with a perceptible change in attire, their speed increased." The clubs followed and finally those on rented wheels, their garb "apparently hastily improvised." He observed numerous tandems. "Bloomer maids outnumbered their sisters in skirts 4 to 1." The paper published hourly figures totaling 2,951 cyclists between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m."

Aftermath

Great changes took place, and swiftly. Cyclists rode in victory on a paved Market Street in 1898. But that victory would be short lived. Roads were improved at about the same time the bicycle lost public fascination to the automobile, and oil began to power transportation. Membership in the L.A.W. slipped heavily by the turn of the century. National bicycle sales dropped from 1.2 million in 1899 to 160,000 in 1909.

The bicycle remained an important option for workers and businesses for decades before being redefined as a toy following World War II. Its popularity rebounded in the 1930's and again strongly in the 1990's. In much of the world, it never left. Appearing between the horse and the automobile, the bicycle had helped define the Victorian era. It aided the liberation of workers (and especially women and children) as it changed concepts of personal freedom. On two wheels, individuals were free to move themselves across much longer distances at a greater speed than ever before, not dependent on horse or rail.

The Great Protest remained unique for 101 years until, on another July 25th, in 1997, bicyclists again took over Market Street. This time the Mayor used the police to attack the riders in an ill-fated attempt to "shut down" Critical Mass. Since then, the monthly rides have continued strong. Nearing its ninth birthday, Critical Mass provides an ongoing space for cyclists to assert their right to the streets, show their numbers, and celebrate the bicycle—in direct lineage from the wheelmen and wheelwomen of 1896.



NO MORE LOANS

The banks are on fire
The basement has been flooded
Barbed wire holds me back
The interiors everywhere
have vanished into
envelopes pushing angst

The moneylenders loathe
their positions as paranoid priests
of the society fastly falling
The stifling silence slips
into public discourse on celebrities
Some get suckered
that there's a way to get off easy

Now the witches are watching
The banks are burning
along with the billboards
Big Banker watchdog
no longer
pacing panting pathetically
sitting staring at six screens
of numbing numbers that
hide children's teeth and eyeglasses
the strewn artifacts of the afterwar debris

The avalanche is inevitable
(no more sympathy for tyrannical speed)
which paradigm will proliferate
the forgotten place
of no plastics and compulsory posing

Watch the banks burning

by Marjorie Sturm

ICON BANKING

You even speak in iconography like coins
brass is heavy —
paper weighs less and is worth more.
Nothing weighs nothing, but
the currency of your breath, the perpetual motion
of the exchange, is worth how much?
Money changes hands, when it changes hands.
Anyone who really spent money like water would be
prudent and wise
because water's movements are dictated by its needs
you can't sell the ocean what it doesn't want.
Let me suggest that you are all nameless, and that
faces and birds and rocks and places
are diminished
where names are denominations.

by Raven

SIEGE OF ANGELS

The Angels flew over downtown this week
under truce of the San Francisco noon.

"Can't miss this," cooed my hair-stylist
drawn outside his shopfront on Columbus

into a civilian congregation
of clients, clerks, panhandlers, lawyers

spellbound by the sounding in the sky.
A dull roar from the north, then a rumbling

in the wind, dying in dry, hissing blasts.
The lunchtime economy leaned sunward

eyes shielded against the silicic
architecture of the market, splendor

blinding as blown glass, when a formation
reflected took shape on the Bay,

machinery flying straighter than nature,
past the Crocker Branch, past Monkey Block

become Transamerica Pyramid,
a militant hallucination

liberating hatreds of the spirit.
(Reverend Barclay, keeper of the tongue,

said: "I have visions fiery to burn
the world down to purpose," prophesying

on the rock at Point Sur, just as here,
from the roof of BofA, a coder

shouts to all, "Here they come!") Inspiration
is no less destructive than aggression,

and aggression no less inspiring
than a poem. Below the siege of Angels

the Pacific yields to the surging Bay,
meeting the Sierra aqueducts

emptying melt from the Mokelumne
to irrigate the spirit of the land.

by Jim Fisher

The Wiggle Mural

an interview with the artists and organizers

The public mural movement has decorated public places in many corners of San Francisco. But the Wiggle Mural, or as it is officially entitled: "The Duboce Bikeway Mural," incongruously on a 400-foot wall on the back of the nation's largest supermarket chain, decorates a place, celebrates a vision, and takes a position—well, actually it takes several. Public art rarely speaks in such a subtle and charming voice, while still packing a punch for anyone who spends the time to take it all in.

The Wiggle Mural (painted in 1998) is a welcome antidote to the sterile corporate planning and tepid public art increasingly inflicted on us throughout a San Francisco succumbing to creeping monoculture. The Wiggle Mural repudiates the insipid hollowness of San Francisco's boosters, while staking out a vision of a radically improved city. Cleverly it represents and symbolically extends its own physical presence astride the crossroads of bicycling San Francisco. As it flows through the hours and along the journey from east to west (or west to east), it broadens our concerns to all kinds of human mobility (the art of moving), as well as the relation of our mobility to the surrounding ecology. Visually and intellectually it forces us to re-think, altering the boundaries of our thoughts, using dimensions of self-reflection to push us beyond our own assumptions about what is and what could be.

A fresh approach is offered here to the art of public murals. The Wiggle Mural is unique in style, scope, and integration of purpose with place. Splendid public artists such as Rigo and Twist and the Precita Eyes muralists have been joined by Mona Caron, Joel Pomerantz, Gordon Dean and their team. The walls of the city blandly and maddeningly snore, or perhaps they yammer the usual "buy!" and "sell!"—except in the oppositional art that leaps at us from surprising places. The Wiggle Mural is situated to entertain and edify a constituency of bicyclists, pedestrians and Muni riders, precisely the subjects it includes and addresses. As Joel Pomerantz put it, "it's our mural, it's our space."

Long before the mural was finished, the space it was beginning to adorn was already taking on a new life as the public commons of cyclists and other citizens ready to embrace a different approach to city life. In an era when market relations increasingly throw us as isolated shoppers into malls and other zones of hyper-accelerated, transaction-oriented behavior, the re-emergence of new areas of public commons is heartening indeed.

The Duboce Bikeway is a beachhead in a long, slow battle to transform San Francisco into a city really worth living in—not just for the affluent, but for everyone. Every inch of territory we can take away from the banal daily descent into life as targeted markets helps restore our humanity a bit.

—Chris Carlsson

Chris Carlsson (CC): This mural is uniquely situated in a physical location that's linked to a community, AND as an urban space, many communities pass through it in different ways, some on are on streetcars, some are pushing shopping carts, some are getting a clean needle, some of them are just walking by on the way home with a bag of groceries. All of these individuals pass through YOUR lives as artists, as human beings. In that fascinating area are politics, and very specific human relations. As the artists and promoters of this project, what is your sense of the relationship of this project to communities?

Mona Caron (MC): You gave a good cross-section of the diverse communities that pass through Duboce Street, the location of the mural. What they have in common is their transience. The only part of the population "in transit" that never passes through this street are car drivers. From the vantage point of someone in a car, this section of Duboce Street looks like a gutter, barely a street, if it is noticed at all. It is of no use to them as they drive by.

The official purpose of the mural is to celebrate the opening of this stretch of Duboce street as a two-way bike path. It is a huge mural, 360 feet long and 2 stories high, and to car drivers this project might seem out of proportion with the space to which it is dedicated, since its square footage exceeds that of the street it celebrates. (I got several comments to the effect of: "too bad the project is in such a bad location"). On the contrary, it is a great location, thanks to the absence of car traffic!

It was the primary goal of my concept for this mural to illustrate the importance of this street to all the other communities. I tried to do it by depicting the street itself in the painting in context with the rest of the city and the rest of our lives, within a sort of panoramic continuum from the east to the west of the City. This isn't arbitrary, because the mural shows the actual path a bicyclist takes to get from anywhere downtown to anywhere west in the city. A bicyclist going west who wants to avoid the hills, necessarily goes through the Wiggle, usually starting with this particular little stretch of Duboce Street.

Joel Pomerantz (JP): The first time that I had an overall perspective about the role of the community and the role of the mural in the community was the first day that I stayed until dusk during the summer. We left at different times everyday, and rarely stayed past 5 or 5:30, because the sun would come into view on the wall, and highlight all the bumps. It was also starting to get really windy. One day it wasn't windy at all, so everyone left and I stayed. I just sat on the stoop of our paint wagon and watched as the sun went down behind and reflected off the windows on the hills in the East Bay. I was sitting there contemplating what a beautiful spot it must have been before all the buildings were there, when I started to notice more and more cyclists going by from downtown. Maybe one out of ten would be someone I knew. About half of them would wave or just ring their bell, or somehow acknowledge my presence there, at least partly because they knew I was connected with the mural. More and more of the people I knew started showing up and talking with each other. We were creating a place for people to meet each other and exchange ideas, and use the public space, the street, as a kind of a market place. The ideas were flowing back and forth between that space and the Bike Coalition office through a corridor of bicycles going back and forth doing errands. During that hour and a half period of time all kinds of stuff happened, leaflets were exchanged, newsletters were brought, people were asking other people to come and meet them there. It just happened to happen, on a beautiful day with no wind.

MC: Yeah, it definitely became more and more of a forum, an *agora*, especially for bike commuters who were coming from downtown. Sometimes there were as many 15 or 20 people spontaneously stopping and chatting.

The whole mural project gave me an opportunity to get to really know other communities, not only bicyclists, but also neighbors, the homeless people living there, and other nomadic people, like young punks, etc. As the project progressed, I started getting there earlier and earlier in the morning, and staying later and later in the evenings, coming across a greater range of people.

CC: What were your longest days? Dawn to dusk?

MC: Yeah, pretty much, especially when the windy season was over, and in the last month. It was also a part-time street cleaning job. I found myself trying to read what had gone on in the street during the night from the traces left behind, trying to decode these signs. The most unpleasant were human feces and puke and things like that, but there were other ones too. Signs were left on the wall. No tags or graffiti, amazingly, but every once in a while somebody would scratch the wall in a way that looked deliberate, and we would wonder if this was some sort of feedback, some sort of communication, maybe not even voluntary. That was a very interesting experience. It's ironic because part of the mural shows how a bicyclist gets to see the land she treads close-up. That concept is represented symbolically by the extreme close-up of the beach area and the trace of the bike tire in the sand mingling with the footprints of the insects and animals. Interestingly for me, while I was painting this rather poetic example of looking at the ground, I got to experience a detailed look at that stretch of Duboce Street, one that wasn't quite as poetic, as I told you. I like the fact that that happened: in a sense, I took my own advice.

CC: What did you discover about the community of people living in and around the mural site?

MC: The homeless people were the people I started my days with. In the later months of the project there'd be over a dozen people sleeping around the storage bin when I got there in the morning. I established a rapport with

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some of the regulars, while others I tried to avoid. As time went on, my involvement with them changed in various ways: Some of the truly schizophrenic people I was scared of in the beginning turned out to be surprisingly normal and helpful when addressed directly. Other people I thought were harmless turned out to be untrustworthy. But I got to really care about a few of them. One example was Rick, who eventually disappeared, and it still bothers me that I don't know what happened to him. He had built a shack behind our storage bin, one wall was made up of a door on the side of which was written "It ain't the Ponderosa, but it's Home Sweet Home." I had a few long chats with him, some about his amazing life, some about the mural. The guy had a great sense of humor.

One time, he came to me and said "Mona! OK so here's the way I see it." And he proceeded to give me a meticulous and creative interpretation of the mural in the form of a story. It was hilarious, and actually a veiled criticism. The jist of his story was that a giant alien (the Burning Man I had painted instead of the Sutro tower) had taken over the city, the big bicyclist in the west end being the last one to flee town. I understood his message, which was about the city looking too deserted and sterile, and I worked harder after that at making the picture look more alive.

Mona Caron painting the mural photos by Tristan Savatier

CC: Was that the only example of an unexpected crossover between one community and another there? I mean, sometimes you see homeless folks with a shopping cart full of bikes!

JP: Eddie B. and Brenda frequently did stuff for us. I'm pretty sure they're the ones who brought us that beautiful Turkish rug, and three different chairs at three different times, and generally did us a lot of good turns, including reporting a guy who had stolen a bunch of stuff from our bags.

CC: They would have probably been that way regardless of the subject of your mural, no?

MC: The subject of the mural had absolutely no influence on our interaction with the homeless. The bicyclists' concerns are about as far from their more basic and fundamental ones as, say, Botticelli's *Primavera*. Rather, the fact in itself that we were painting a mural, therefore occupying the space for a reason that is not utilitarian nor commercial, that did influence the way they interacted with us a great deal. I remember the guy who returned some stuff he stole from us, saying: "I didn't know you guys were artists!". And Eddie and Brenda, the homeless couple forcing a cash donation on us. Another crazy guy soliciting donations for us from passersby. Others helping us clean the street... Lots of other anecdotes spoke of the fact that people working on public art are much less alienating to them than people working a "real" job, especially if such jobs make them, in their eyes, representatives of authority or of private property or of class differences.

CC: Communities are something you forge in the practice of relating on that day-to-day basis. Anybody can connect in that form, it doesn't matter what your background is. That's why urban street spaces are so interesting to me, because they bring people together who normally would not cross each other's paths, but if they do and something stops them—that's where you guys come in, you've created something to stop them.

Gordon Dean (GD): That's the difference between my experience painting there and other experiences I've had on the street. Usually I'm trying to get somewhere, and so I'm riding my bike and I'm avoiding traffic. Here I was planted in one place for a long period of time. You saw things pass by you. It's just a very different view.

CC: You talk about other groups of people, other individuals, not particularly painters, coming there, finding their reason to stop, and actually forming new kinds of relationships, or maybe taking new initiatives based on having discovered each other there in that space? I would assume that the latter would largely arise among bicyclists?

JP: Lots of it was non-bicyclists. The descriptive details of the mural attracted people giving their friends and out-of-town visitors walking tours of the wall, even before it was done. The mural really did spark a new sense of what that part of town is for. People told us that they had changed their com-

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Some of the imagery in the flying machines is the imagery of early flight, which was always pedal-powered and bicycle-related. The downtown part of the mural is an exaggerated representation of reality. You can see a horrible traffic jam happening here. It's six o'clock and Critical Mass is starting, and there's something strange that's happening. Some of the bicyclists are taking off, on strange contraptions and flying machines. They're all lifting up and flying around in the air. Each one is trailing a yellow banner. These people represent the dreamers of the city, the utopians, the people who have an idea of what reality could be like. That's what the yellow banner symbolizes. One huge yellow banner turns into the rest of the mural, meaning this is one of the possible ideas of how the city could be. We take a close-up of one of these banners—one of these utopias—and we discover a representation of a very realistic and plausible utopia.

mute route to come past there, or they had gotten off the Muni train even though that wasn't their destination, or that they had purposely walked around the back of the Safeway instead of the front while they were going home with their groceries.

GD: A couple of people at the unveiling, and others thereafter, talked to me about how the mural changed their experience of the Wiggle and that stretch of Duboce street in particular, which used to be a creepy place . They said that now they feel they're arriving in their neighborhood, or they've left work and they're coming home when they pass this threshold. It's a fun place to be. That was very gratifying for me to hear from other people, because I was having that feeling myself.

Origins

(JP): I coordinated this project, the Duboce Bikeway Mural. The SF Bicycle Coalition was invited by the city of San Francisco to paint this mural. We've been working at it for about three years, with the last five months being painting. Peter Tannen works for the city as the unpaid staff person on bicycle programs, and he had the idea. Peter got a grant from the federal government that had something to do with disruption of urban blight or something hilarious. He came to us and said, "We have the money, we need someone to coordinate it. We thought the Bicycle Coalition would be a good source for that labor." I of course leapt at the opportunity. Naively I thought there'd be a lot of competition for the job but it was just me. I had to raise whatever money I could for the project, and what I did raise was about $12,000 in donations from individuals, local businesses and foundations. Half the money, about $15,000, was already there, and that was the money we were allowed to use on materials such as paint, which is very expensive.

CC: What is the message of the mural?

JP: We've always hesitated on that one. There are three or four messages in the mural. The first message of the mural was that it can be and should be a pleasant, in fact, a joyful experience, to go across the city, by bicycle or walking

or any other means. The second is that the bicycle is part of the natural setting and part of the urban setting, and it's got a low impact on the natural environment, so it's a vehicle and a machine that represents the connection between the urban struggle and the natural balance. The third message has to do with the flowing nature of the bike ride through the city and the connection between that and this geographic location. Because this is the spot where a creek used to flow and it's flat. People bicycle here to avoid the hills, and that represents one of the main issues of bicycling in San Francisco, hence our flowing design. The fourth message came along towards the end of our process, after a tour of the Coit Tower murals.

MC: Those murals inspired us to add a more polemic political edge to the east part of the mural.

GD: That was one of the funnest moments of the whole project. The same night after visiting Coit Tower, Mona and Bill Stender and I had a couple of hours of brainstorming at a cafe in the course of which we fleshed out this idea. We wanted to tie up some loose ends and give a little bit more political symbolism to the mural. It had a lot to do with adding in the traffic jam in the area depicting downtown and making it into something that's supposed to show the here and now, while turning the rest of the mural symbolically into a future than can be.

MC: We basically decided to add some imagery of contrast and negation to the rest of the mural. A bit of dystopia to enhance the utopia. While working on the sketches for this mural I went through many versions, going back and forth between a design showing only an ideal city and one which showed contrast. This being a bike and ecology-centered mural, the contrast was to show car traffic and pollution. At the time (1997) Critical Mass was very much talked about and bicycling was always on the front page of the news. As usual, the media tended to reduce the meaning of the struggle to a mindless "bikes vs.cars" issue. That made me feel even stronger about wanting to avoid shallow and preachy "good versus bad" moralistic themes in the mural. I don't believe that bicycling is superior to other alternatives to the car. The point we're trying to make is, like Critical Mass, much broader: It's about a vision of the city as a moveable feast, rather than a parking lot. When the last sketch was done, there were no cars in it. I decided to turn the whole thing into a depiction of the city that holds together harmoniously—you shouldn't even notice the absence of cars. That was a soft way of making that statement.

But after seeing the Coit tower murals, we saw the advantage of dramatic tension stemming from the negative reinforcing the positive. We decided to turn that eastern section of the wall into an unrealistic depiction of reality so that the rest of it could be a very realistic looking representation of utopia.

CC: Why do you suppose that so many of us have decided at this time to give political meaning vis-a-vis community and social interaction to the bicycle and not to the bus, where we're all sitting next to each other and could easily have conversations and have new social experiences?

MC: When I ride a bicycle I mostly connect with other bicyclists. Taking the bus, or public transportation, is more conducive to exposing oneself to the rest of society. When I take the bus, there is a wider cross-section of society that I encounter.

Democracy and Collaboration

JP: I wonder how the two of you felt about collaborating with three different groups: the artists who became the art team; the collaboration with those who were less skilled, or had less time; and the collaboration with the community, the people who were putting demands on you or were asking questions of you, or were commissioning you to do the project?

GD: I'll start out on the negative side. I found it difficult to work with volunteers with whom I didn't share a certain vocabulary. I'm talking about people who didn't consider themselves artists, but wanted to help paint. I know that there were ways they could help, and I felt it was important for them to participate, for the sake of the project, partly to get it done, and partly to have more people involved with it. At the same time, it was really frustrating, because sometimes I felt like I was having to teach art class at the same time I was just asking somebody to do something.

MC: When that happened to me, sometimes I was nervous but often I found it interesting. I was very conscious that I was teaching basic principles of how to render, how to paint. I took the opportunity to test out how it would be to be a teacher, because that's something that I've considered.

CC: How was it with people who were easier to work with? A lot of times there's a sense that you as the people on the top of the heap have to make your volunteers feel good about their participation. That's a job!

JP: We had a turning point where I explained to Mona, that I was no longer willing to occupy volunteers. In other words, tell volunteers that 'I'm sorry, but we don't have anything for you to do.' Until that point we were trying to strike a balance where we would find the right job for the right volunteer. Many of the jobs would require very little skill, but we got to a point where we didn't have unskilled jobs for painters anymore. (Of course everyone wanted to paint.) Jobs like cleaning up the street after the litter had accumulated during the night, or helping reorganize or restore the paints—those jobs were really not very coveted.

MC: What makes it a community project? It's often called a community mural because everybody in the community participates democratically. Each person has their own thing they want to put in the mural, and they each do it in their own style and in their own way. The result from that is often very fun and colorful and very interesting. But

that is not the style that we wanted to have. I agonized about this fact a lot, because having decided on a unified design and style, carrying it out meant that I was kind of the dictator, saying how things were going to be done, etc. This was often very hard and made me feel very guilty. I felt how undemocratic this process was. There was a hierarchy—me and the art team directing the other people.

CC: Wouldn't you argue that 'real art' requires that kind of specificity of vision?

MC: 'Real art?' See, I don't believe in this distinction. I think the community mural made by children is just as much real art as this is. It's about a conscious decision about what exactly you want to achieve, and what kind of technique is required to accomplish that, and what kind of skill this technique requires. It turned out to be a community mural because a lot of people got involved. During the design, Joel organized brainstorming sessions with whoever was interested. People's suggestions and requests while we were painting were taken into consideration, and sometimes directly incorporated into the design. Lots of volunteers got to help, but not with everything, and not democratically. But also there's a lot of other communities that got to participate in other ways. All the communities that we talked about before, the homeless folks, the support of the neighbors, and the input that I got from them, led to a lot of details that I hadn't thought of before. They were like requests.

CC: Are you drawing a distinction between an open, interactive and consultative process as opposed to a formal democracy?

MC: Yes, it was more of the former, not very much of the latter. I still remember one time a group of developmentally disabled people came down and said "oh, we're part of the community and we'd like to help paint." I thought, gosh, it would be great, but then I also panicked at the same time because some of these people didn't have very good coordination, even just for simple tasks. I think we could've done a really beautiful abstract painting with them, but not what we were doing.

JP: I think we did really well. For example, there were a number of times when people decided themselves that their skills had run out and they'd better stop painting. I did my best to foster that. Many people leapt into the fray and were as enthusiastic as could be and did more than their skills allowed them to do. Josh said, "My ability to contribute to this mural has come to an end," now that we're on to the

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The Wiggle goes from Duboce Street up to the Haight, zig-zagging through the lower Haight. The Wiggle is represented as flowing water because the flattest route that bicyclists naturally take is also the lowest route where water naturally collects. There used to be a creek here under the Wiggle. The water ends up in the sewer grate because that's where the creek actually is today. The Wiggle here, the creek, becomes a bike path. The Victorians are more colorful than they are in reality, because we wanted to represent the diversity of our community, not just in terms of ethnicity, but also in terms of ideology. The yellow house is a Buddhist house. There's another house that is also slightly golden color which is a North African color scheme. The corner house is red, the Commie house, with a Cuban flag in the window, and so on.

more skilled tasks. Well, that's great, that's a realistic way to include the community without breaking the standard that Mona was setting.

MC: The kind of design we had decided to do had to be done meticulously: in no other way would the transitions have had the kind of *trompe l'oeil* effect they were supposed to. If those effects hadn't worked, the whole thing would have flattened and looked like the paint-by-number piece we were trying to avoid. Fortunately, many people that were initially kind of skeptical actually reacted very enthusiastically when the first details were up and looked so 3D. If we look at the *inclusion* that this high-skill level provoked, rather than at the exclusion it provoked, we have various beautiful examples of people who got involved who had a special high skill that they got to display in this mural. For instance, Bill Stender, he has a sign shop, and mostly works with computers.

JP: We needed a lot of signage, we needed a lot of text in certain areas, and we needed the tools of the signmaker's trade.

MC: He's a super skilled letterer and a sign painter. It's something that he loved to do and actually missed from his real work.To sum it up, some people were perhaps excluded, but we opened the doors to a lot of people with incredible talents that never get to express them.

CC: That undercuts the notion that this was exclusive. There's a certain level of expertise required for certain results, whether it's brain surgery or a beautiful lizard or whatever it may be.

GD: Two hypothetical examples: One where you create a design, each person has a square in a grid. The people from the community come and do their thing in their individual square. Now, everybody has done their thing fully, it's there, but they don't necessarily relate to each other. There might be some really powerful energy that comes from all these things that weren't really meant to go together, and suddenly being together, POW! There it is. Another way of doing things is to come up with a design out of one person's brain, then brainstorming among a group of people to build on it, but there's a unity to it. You find people to cooperate with each other and take advantage of their best skills in order to create this unified image. I think we were trying to create a unified image, and we were trying to find the right people to do it.

MC: I don't think that our way is necessarily better than other ways. That's why I really liked Gordon's description just now. I think the situation with all the discrete squares is often extremely powerful. Whether you like it or not, depends on your own personal aesthetic preferences, but it is just as much art as another approach. The difference is that because of our own aesthetic preferences we chose to do it this way.

CC: I've dealt with this in a different context, namely political collectives. The question of formal democracy versus this kind of amorphous way of participating. The tendency is for the people who play the role of the planner, the manager or the visionary, or whatever it might be, often become subject to the same tension that you felt when you had to tell someone 'no, not like that, like this.' There's a vision and you know what it's going to take to get it there, and other people are participating in various ways. If they have equal power to you, in a moment of decision about something as crucial as the scope of the whole project, unless they are as well informed as you or have the same aesthetic skills, they can't play that role. Then the accusations come that you're being authoritarian.

JP: The purpose of the democratic decision-making structure is to ensure that people don't abuse their power. If you're lucky enough to have a group that works well together, or a person that knows how to make people see their importance to the project and feel good about it, or some other way of making sure that democracy happens, then you don't have to have the democracy enforcing structure because democratic structure just means a democracy enforcing structure. Whereas a democratic system, an organic democratic process often doesn't have a democratic structure, it just IS democracy.

CC: Exactly.

JP: I object to the idea that each person contributed their expertise, because one of the things that was possible on this project was to learn. Many people became experts or became good enough to contribute through the process. I'm thinking in particular of Seth Damm. He had many things that he was already good at and he contributed those. But additionally he tried some new things that were completely out of his range, and he mastered them. He figured out how to tackle the problem, of, for instance, the hidden lettering in the water of the wiggle creek. It took him three or four different versions before he had something he was satisfied with. He came to me and told me that the breakthrough came one day when someone suggested to him to think of letters ON the water, rather than IN the water. So there was a lot of learning like that, not just the skilled people on the art team, but many different people.

GD: It was one helluva great introduction to the bicycling community.

JP: It changed my role in the bike community that I was already connected with. It put Mona suddenly into the position of being connected to a community that she had no previous connection with. Gordon was like a combination of the two. He was already somewhat involved in the bike community before he started painting.

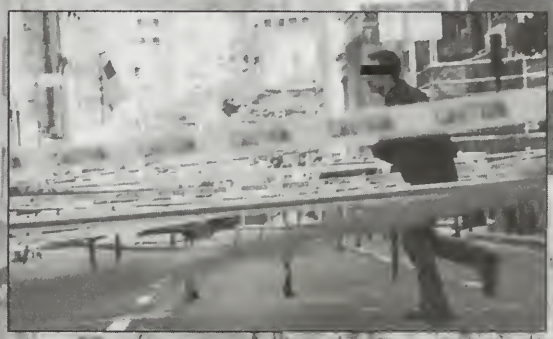
GD: I was already a bike commuter, but I wasn't involved with the bike community.

JP: Whereas Mona didn't even have a bicycle.

MC: Uh oh, now it's on tape, they'll want to *erase the whole mural!*

"Wall Street West All Tied Up!"

An Art Attack by the Department of Public Art, June 18, 1999, San Francisco



On June 18, 1999, as part of a global day of action against capitalism, the Department of Public Art struck at high noon on Montgomery between California and Pine streets, in the middle of San Francisco's Financial District. In 90 seconds several rolls of caution tape and 170 neckties were quietly swaying in the suddenly emptied street. "Wall Street West" was "All Tied Up!"

These little signs were attached to each of 170+ neckties

photos by Wild Billy

The Billboard Liberators

The Billboard Liberation Front (B.L.F.) always seems to attract inquiries as to our motivations; how we see our place (if any) in relation to various art "movements"; why we "hate" and want to attack advertisers and corporations.

Firstly, our little group has had well over two hundred people involved since its inception. Every single one of them is an individual with very individual beliefs, opinions and politics. Motivations in this ongoing parade of lunatics, anarchists and Republicans are typically in the direction of the refrigerator and the next can o' beer. Specific billboard improvements are generally chosen contingent upon caprice and serendipity. Of course, it's also necessary for the idea person to coerce, cajole, plead, threaten and do whatever else it takes to motivate the rest of us to tear ourselves away from our favorite computer games and TV shows long enough to plan and execute a successful "hit."

Secondly we are not part of a movement unless it be as Blank DeCoverly so evocatively put it: "that most truly democratic of all human fellowships: The Bowel Movement." We are certainly aware of many of the fine artistic cabals of this Century. My associates doubtlessly hold a variety of opinions about these groups and the many individuals that comprised them.

I can only speak for myself: I have been personally impressed and influenced by the fine marksmanship (and plays) of Alfred Jarry, the stout pugilism (and drawings) of George Grosz, the heroic drinking (and stories) of Charles Bukowski, the impressive sex life (and stories) of Henry Miller, the world wide gallivanting (and photos) of Margaret Bourke-White.

Altering billboards is an activity requiring total engagement of the senses. You are doing something NOW. It's dangerous, exhilarating, a little stupid and entirely alive. It's a PRANK, it's a joke; you can thumb your nose at the wonderful institutions that control us. You are completely alive when you're at it. However, as a politically revolutionary concept (in the sense of making the world a more fair or livable place for the most people) altering ad messages is not important in the least. If "billboard banditry" actually challenged the corporations control over their markets ($) they would track down each and every one of us and kill us like dogs. A really good improved board might get a few people laughing at Exxon or R.J. Reynolds or the Government but we will continue to pay our taxes, drink Coke and watch *Survivor*.

Art? I don't think so. Only an idiot could think any of our work is art. Our friend and associate, the prolific billboard hacker, Ron English is an ARTIST: a talented painter who discovered a clever way to display his work when the commodity exchanges that are galleries refused to show him. There are a few other serious artists that do billboards but for the most part billboard "artists" are pranksters.

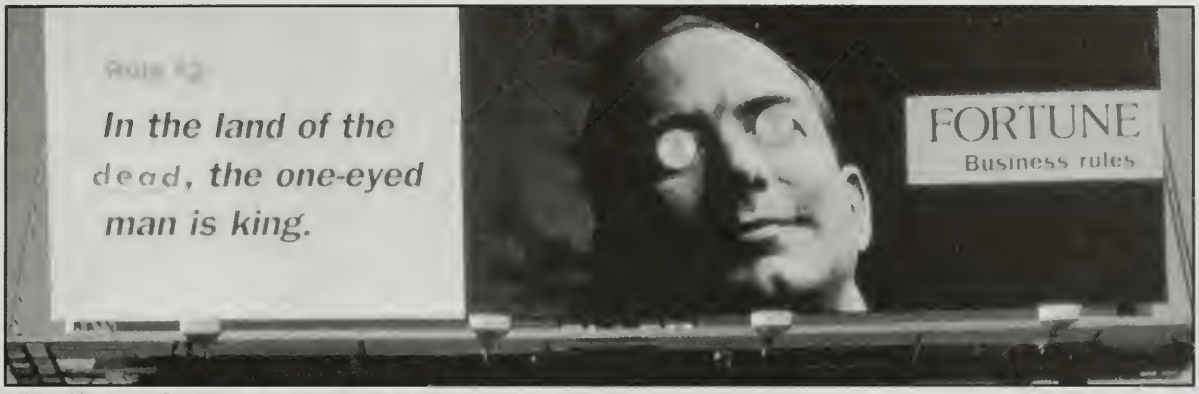
Thirdly I would like to once and for all clarify the BLF stance on our corporate benefactors and clients. Almost all of the active members of the BLF and many of the past members are employed by or contract with large corporations. Show me an American who will give up toilet paper for the rest of his/her life in order to save the life of an unseen/unknown infant in Mozambique or to stop the clear cutting of a virgin forest and I'll show you either a saint or an idealistic middle/upper middle class white kid who will renege on the deal before they turn thirty. Corporations and the attendant commodification of everything are a fact of life (unless you're hypersensitive to a fault and rich enough to isolate yourself from the daily commercial grind). Until the emerging corporate oligarchy that has replaced monarchies, nationalist based imperialism and state sponsored socialism is in turn replaced by a new (hopefully not worse) form of collective bondage of the human mind and spirit, it's the only game in town.

For an individual or small group to pose any real threat to this dominant form of Control is to ask to be destroyed. You can make fun of them as long as you don't threaten their money. Keeping your individual spirit and sense of humor despite this overwhelming oppression is about the best thing you can hope for. Sharing this humor with others is a prank and, short of actually helping people less fortunate than you or uplifting the human spirit through the creation of genuine art, pranking is humanity's highest calling. We at the BLF say: ***Prank Em.***

Billboard Liberation Front publicity still

The Invoice is in the Mail!

The service we at the BLF have provided for advertisers and their clients is one that we can no longer allow to go undervalued. The logic of advertising dictates that any product placement or trademark exposure whatsoever (whether positively or negatively defining the product) actually results in moving more product units. This concept, still a radical one for the average citizen, has been a well-known fact to the marketing professional for years. Plymouth Neon ads a few years back made this clear by using the "look" of graffiti over their billboards.



Billboard Liberation Front

At the BLF we realize that no matter how our work is perceived or judged by any observers based on aesthetic, political or social considerations, the fact is that anytime we improve a billboard it brings more attention to the original product campaign and by consequence sells more of that product. The language of advertising has taken its place as the language of our culture, trivializing and/or supplanting our previous modes of communication through language. America's Best Home Video's, Cops, Jerrysallygeraldopra Springer and all the other TV ad placement formats have carried out Andy Warhol's proclamation that everyone would be famous for 15 minutes. All that's left now is that everyone must advertise. We at the BLF are trying to stay a bit ahead of this emerging trend by actually charging for our ads. We've begun back charging and invoicing our corporate clients, Apple, R.J. Reynolds, etc. for improving their existing ads. It's obvious that advertising is the only way to enter the new millennium. If you can't sell yourself what can you sell?

—*Jack Napier*

Brief History of the BLF

Irving Glikk and I planned the first improvement campaign for "Fact" cigarettes. We made nine paste ups and installed six on boards all around San Francisco on Christmas day 1977. We were nearly apprehended on the sixth board (on the corner of Mission & Army Sts. Our associates on this first project were Steve Johnson (not a real name), Cecily Joland, Igor Pflicht and Robert C_____.

Simon Wagstaff, a friend who worked in journalism, became our press agent and introduced me to the much larger possibilities of communicating our advertising efforts through the media.

Arnold Fleck, Walid Rasheed, Mimi Bathory and others signed on for billboard work through about 1981. After the Marlboro campaign these three formed the splinter group: "Billboard Movement" (BM).

We went into semi-retirement in the mid-eighties returning in 1989 to help Exxon Corporation with a little copywriting.

Walid Rasheed rejoined in 1990 and initiated the "America" board that graced the cover of the S.F. Bay Guardian (after we kidnapped the editor, Tim Redmond at gunpoint and got him really drunk).

Harry Tuttle, Weaso, Dogboy, Ethyll Ketone, L.L. Fauntleroy, Mabel Longhetti, Jason Voorhees, John Thomas, Sarah Conner, Timothy Liddy and others joined up in the early 90's as we launched campaigns supporting Plymouth, Zenith, R.J. Reynolds, Exxon and other fine corporate benefactors.

In 1994 Blank Decoverly signed on as Minister of Propaganda vastly improving our media outreach. He expanded and improved our policy of maximum saturation for minimum effort. The actual BLF output (never very great by the standards of say, Ron English) has always seemed much more substantial due to our successful media efforts. From our very first "hit" we have often done extensive outreach (press releases, phone calls to reporters, coercion, promises, threats) in order to maximize the visibility and impact of our work. From the Plymouth Neon hit in 1994 on, Blank has seen to it that we get way more attention than we deserve!

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Conrad Hoc signed on in 1998 as our Web Master. His efforts in further publicizing our work on the net began with the relatively new concept of e-releases, immediately exposing our most recent work. Conrad's work culminated in our handsome and much visited web site:

<billboardliberation.com>.

A new generation of climbers and copywriters has helped us to maintain public visibility into the new millennium. Self-styled BLF "webslave" Erich Weiss has taken over the bulk of webmaster Conrad Hoc's work. Climbers C.J. DeSoda, Salty Dog and Dick the Dark Lord have stepped in quite effectively in the field installation department. There are dozens of others who have helped us over the years. Most of them are noted in the "Personnel" section of our website.

Billboard Liberation Front

Joe Camel Never Saw What Hit Him!

Some BLF hits actually involved a lot of planning, technically involved installation and comprehensive security. The Joe Camel board done in 1995 is a good example of our work taken to its most extreme level of involvement.

This operation took place during the middle of a weekday on a large board hanging above a donut shop parking lot alongside a well-traveled industrial highway. There were two on the board: B.L.F. tech expert Winslow Leech, and myself. L.L. Fauntleroy had radio position one, with a view of several hundred yards to the north and south. Sarah Conner was along the freeway to the west and John Thomas (dressed as a bum with his radio in a brown paper bag) was high up on a pedestrian overpass commanding a view all around.

The board was composed of a large set of self-contained neon letters reading: "CAMEL" and "Genuine Taste"; a fifteen by fifteen foot light box, back lit with fluorescent lamps, with a stretched, translucent canvas face with Joe Camel's leering visage displayed; a blue white neon border and a faux brick painted background. Winslow and I backed our van up to the board, lay a ladder onto the lower board ladder and proceeded to hump our supplies and tools up onto the platform above. To the entirely oblivious general public (including the S.F. cop that stopped for a donut and parked briefly below us) we were exactly what we looked like: a sign crew in the middle of a commercial job.

In order to improve this Camel board we first simply turned off the disconnect switches on the letters "C" & "E" and the words: "Genuine Taste". We placed an opaque covering over the seraphed lower stem of the letter "L" making it into an "I". We opened the electrical panel on the back of the board and wired in a UL, NECA approved GFI electrical outlet. This electrical installation (a four hundred-dollar value!) was a permanent and legal improvement, allowing anyone coming after us to simply plug in any power tools they might require or perhaps a radio (to make the days work more pleasant). We used the new receptacle to plug in the two self-contained fifteen thousand-volt neon transformers we brought along in order to power the two new neon embellishments we had prepared for old Joe Camel. Once the wiring was done, we installed the new neon. The lettering: "Dead Yet?" was carefully tied onto the existing letters, "Genuine Taste". We hauled up the six-foot diameter red neon skull on a clear lexan (plastic) sheet. We tied off the skull directly over Joe's smiling face.

We were in touch with our security team by radio the entire time. At one point they had us ditch while they checked out a fellow in a van who seemed to be taking an interest in our work. It was a false alarm.

The installation was well documented; there were two journalists on the ground photographing (Nicole Rosenthal) and taking notes (Brad Wieners). We had made a deal with them. They set up on a traffic island squarely in the middle of a busy street about two hundred feet away. Half way between them and the board was an attractive, scantily clad model posing up a storm. To any passer-by, they quite obviously were in the middle of a fashion photo shoot using an industrial cityscape as their backdrop, a sight not at all uncommon in San Francisco. Only the most Sherlockian of citizens might notice the camera was aimed just slightly above the model and to the left.

Our work finally finished, Winslow and I deposited a twelve pack of good beer and a note carefully detailing for the sign men how to completely restore the board to its original configuration. San Francisco, being such a small town, we eventually ran into a friend of a friend who knew one of the billboard company workers. The worker salvaged the neon skull for his garage, kept the note and (we assume) drank the beer.

—J.N.

TALE OF TOIL

Notes from an Outstanding Day at Image

By Texas Frank

My symptoms were typical of the condition. Young, well educated, several months arrived in New York from a collegiate turn in the liberal Midwest, I hungered for a job, a paycheck.

In my fevered mind, the need for fulfilling work was falling to the fear of unemployment.

I found myself back at the offices of Image Advertising Inc., patiently waiting for my "Day of Observation".

I considered the pertinent questions: How could I live with myself, having to tell people that I was in advertising? Can I go into this as a subversive? Do I have the wherewithal? Can I really bring a place down? Or would I simply sell out, doing a job to the best of my ability because that's the way you're supposed to do things? Still, at a promised 48 grand a year, selling out might well be an option. I sat still, musing on that figure. 48 thousand dollars is no small carrot. Again, I had the standard symptoms. I even held back the desire to openly mock the man with the thick cologne and thin earring, Michael, the man who interviewed me last week wearing an orange day-glo sweatshirt under a black corduroy sportcoat.

At this point, it is important to mention Def Leppard, whose music shook the floor from the next room, the room that I recognized from my interview as the nightclub that plays the hits at three in the afternoon. I wondered what kind of meeting could be had over 300 decibels of "Pour Some Sugar on Me."

Finally, the music stopped, and a dozen youthful folk streamed out of the "conferenceroom." It occurred to me that Def Leppard had never released a live album, that the whoops and cheers I heard were the sum of the ungraceful enthusiasm of the employees of

Image Advertising. But at least they seemed to have enthusiasm, excitement. Was I to be one of them? I could do worse than to work for a place that had me enjoying hair metal with a bunch of people my age, couldn't I?

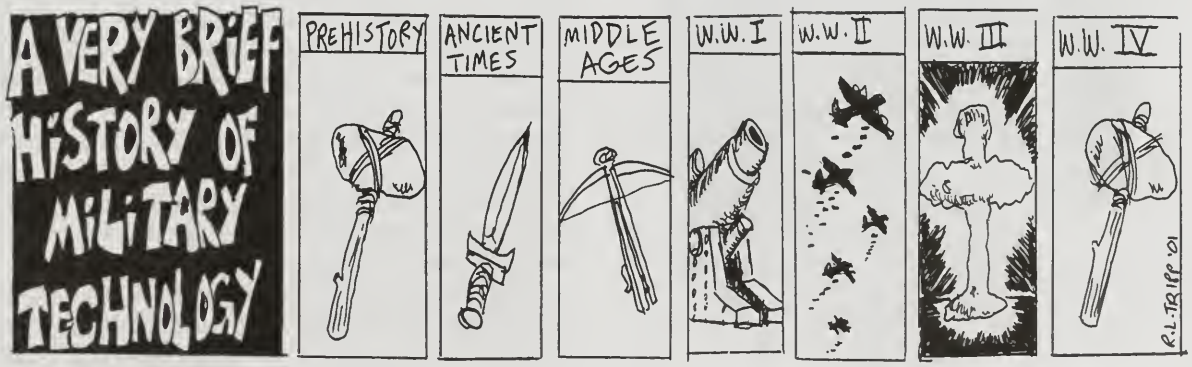
Michael, voice riding on a wave of cologne, called me in, shook my hand overly hard, and stared into my face with the warmth of a rutting buffalo. Standing in the room was a lanky man, whose thinness and height accented the rectangularity of his head. The two-inch long horn-shaped earring did nothing to help in his matter. Steve smiled a sly, toothy smile, and introduced himself as my mentor for the day. They excused me to speak in private.

Taking advantage of my aimlessness, I peeked inside the Def Leppard room and saw the marker board—charts, graphs, dollar signs. It had been a sales meeting, befitting the room's décor of posters bearing great waves and golf courses and captions of SUCCESS and CHALLENGE. I winced, but thought of the carrot, the carrot.

Outside, I met Jenny, a cherubic girl recently transplanted from small town Pennsylvania. She greeted me with a handshake involving twisting, interlocked thumbs and snapping fingers—too intricate for someone you've just met. When I managed to follow the dance of pudgy hands, she congratulated my coolness, wondering aloud why none of these other New Yorkers could get it. No one responded to her. Jenny liked my hair, and told me as much. She thought it, like my handshaking ability, "very cool." I thanked her, politely. "Are you coming out with Steve today?" I told her yes.

"Oh, awesome. He's very cool." Then, after a pause, "The best." Have you been here long, Jenny? "No. I'm new." What do we do here? "Steve will tell you. He's the best. Very cool."

Dave, a South African man who'd spent the last seven years traveling the globe, joined us at the door. He, like I, was on his "Day of Observation." So, Dave, do you know what we're doing? "Na, man, they havun't told me shitt. But the munny sounds viry nice."



The day was a jewel in the crown of a gorgeous fall, and I didn't mind being outside, though I did begin to wonder what we were doing outside. Steve took us several blocks before explaining that Image Advertising worked with various glamour accounts as a grassroots marketer. Somewhere along the line, he let loose with the phrase "Direct marketing," which sounds, at first, innocuously corporate and meaningless.

Quick. What do a hot dog cart pusher, the beer man at a ballpark, someone selling designer knock-off watches out of their coat, and a crack dealer have in common? They're all direct marketers.

Today, I would observe Steve and Jenny work for the Lexi Salon account. "It's cool," Steve told me, privately. "This is the greatest job in the world. All you do is talk to beautiful women all day." I could get down with that, right? I fought myself to accept this asinine thought. Carrot, carrot... I kept walking.

Steve made insincere small talk. "Where are you from? What did you do? Cool, cool."

Jenny led us by several feet, her enthusiasm bringing her out of earshot on the busy Midtown streets, ready to represent The Best Salon in the City.

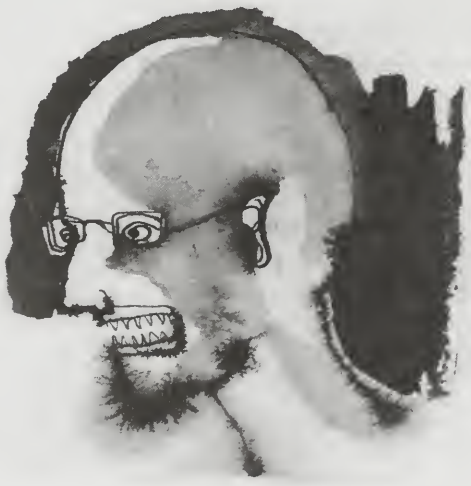
After five more blocks and the requisite civilities, Dave grew suspicious of the job and began to press for specific answers. "Well," Steve started, "What we do is place ourselves out here, at strategic points, and represent our clients directly to the beautiful women of Midtown.

You like talking to beautiful women, don't you?" Dave, affecting his good humor and heterosexuality, nodded. "Good. And you like to make money, right?" Another nod.

"Cool. Cool. You'll do great."

Dave pressed harder, but Steve had bounded into the lead. Jenny heard his questioning and turned, still smiling a smile that began to look less and less a product of enthusiasm and more and more one of simpleness. "Relax," she said. "Just watch Steve. He's the man.

The best. Very cool."



Minna Eloranta

We stopped walking at the corner of 49th street and Park Avenue, the heart of Midtown Manhattan, among some of the most expensive real estate in the world. This, I thought, is where the businesses trap the businessmen. This is where money flows like the rivers that once fed civilizations. This is where I might end up working in a despicable industry for my pile of gold..Looking up at the sky here is an entirely different experience from doing so anywhere else.

In other places, looking up, you might see pure sky, blue or black or grey, and sense the majesty of space, sense your place in a world blessed with the divinity of mountains. Or you might see grand human achievement: buildings, monuments, and sense the majesty of toil and suffering and history, sense your place in a world blessed and cursed with the divinity of human ability and effort. Here, you look up, and you see beautiful affronts of sensibility, arrogant, poking at the belly of the sky, and sense the majesty of metaphor, sense your small place in a hideous, enticing universe of money and the loss of soul.

This is the carrot.

Steve spoke, in a way that suggested a love of Tom Cruise: "Here we are. This is the deal.

All day long, we are going to select beautiful women, and we are going to get them to come to our client, Lexi Salon. What we offer them is a three hundred dollar value: hair cuts, shampoos, nails, feet, massage. All for sixty bucks. One by one, you're going to see us get rejected, but that's cool, 'cause we only want women who really want take care of themselves. Really, they sell themselves on the service, because they like being beautiful.

We just have to tell them that. That's all we do. We are very excited, because this is exciting. Alright? Jenny, ready? Alright. Who's giving me money?" He turned around and faced his audience, a never-ending stream of men and women on their way to lunch, to work, to shop, to live in New York. He reached for his breath mints.

Dave and I stood several feet away, trying to look like passers-by who had simply stopped to wait for dates and friends, an act that grows transparent after a few minutes. We watched Steve and Jenny flag women down and produce their salon menus to turning backs and deaf ears. After a few tries, Steve took a break and came to us.

"Ok. There are five steps to what we do: 1) The Intro, 2) The Short Story, 3) The Display, 4) The Close, and 5) The Rehash, and just remember, the Rehash is the Cash. The better at this you are, the more money you'll make. You get a cut of every sale. See..." He stopped for a moment, lost in involuntary cheer, and began again, "the beauty of all of this is...there's a logic to it. A plan. That's what you learn at Image. You learn the five steps.

You learn the plan, the logic, y'know? That's the beauty. There's no stupid bullshit—you just learn the steps and you make money. I love it!" He turned again, eyes wide,

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waving his hand in a sassy, outreached, come-hither motion to a beautiful woman in leather, and approached her. "HI...I'd like to invite you to my salon..."

Jenny was not having a good first ten minutes of it, being blown off by no less than three women so far. She saw that I saw this, and told me, "Most of these people are bitches. But hey, that's cool. That's when you just have to be like, 'Ok, baby, have a nice day!' y'know? You can't be desperate or pathetic." I recalled her handshake and I saw a need in this woman to show herself full of brass.

Steve's woman in leather had by now crossed the street, and he came back, asking me, "So. Do you remember the five steps?" I recited them perfectly, and Steve smiled a big brotherly smile. "You'll be great."

Dave was tiring of this, and wanted some more answers. "Whut about whin it gits cowld?". "Well, we're hot!" Steve snapped. "When you get as focused as I do, you won't mind the cold. I'm pumped, baby! I mean, you just think of the money you make, the women you talk to, and you just get so into it, you block out everything else. You just get in the zone, baby." Later, I asked Steve how much he made and when he started. Being a Manager Trainee, he makes $25 per sale, and he started three and a half months ago. That puts him on the street since July. I wondered, to myself, how many cold days there'd been since July.

He popped another Tic-Tac and waved down some more women. Five feet away, Jenny spied a middle-aged woman coming down the sidewalk. She tried her line, squinting her eyes in mock interest and twirling her thin hair. "Excuse me, where did you get your hair cut?" The woman could smell the acting and brought her cigarette up to chest level in defense. "In Staten Island."

"Oh, really? I...'cause I—really like it—and I was wondering if you'd like to try a full body salon..."

In stride, the woman waved her burning cigarette in Jenny's face and continued walking, away.

She tried again not long after this—a pair of women this time—and stopped them long enough to get to Step Three before I stopped paying attention.

More and more, my thoughts drifted to the source of the gorgeous lunchtruck aroma. Dave too, apparently, as he turned to me and marveled, "It smills loike the puhfect curry mix, dunit?" It did, and I eyed greedily the styrofoam boxes of curry chicken and rice that kept making their way away from the cart.

Soon, the scent, the good, wholesome, soulful scent, had taken its toll on the South African Traveler. "Aw, fuk this. This is fukin stchewpid. I make more munny waiting tables, and I dun't hafta feel like some fukin arse on the stchreet. I'm going ta git me some lunch. Good luck witchaself."

Steve watched his deserter waltz away like so many beautiful women and approached me for damage control. "See? It's not for everyone. You're still with it, right?" I nodded, feigning enthusiasm. "Good. Just keep watching. We're just getting warmed up."

He turned his back to eye the pedestrians, and I went over to the lunch truck for some chicken and rice. Extra hot sauce, please. Thanks. I considered whether or not this was rude, to stand here on a street corner and eat while

Steve and Jenny worked. I dug my fork in.

I ate leisurely, realizing that once this box was empty, all I would have left is watching "Harassing for Dollars." I saw Jenny produce some credit card slips, and her pair of women followed suit with shiny Platinum Cards..Once they crossed the block, she squealed with excitement. Seeing that Steve was busy in the middle of Step Three himself, she approached me with her shine. "I just made two sales!" I smiled approvingly, mouth full of chicken gristle. "I get ten dollars a sale!" I wanted desperately to spit out the unappealing bite, but out of respect for this woman, I swallowed instead. I maintained my approving smile.

Congratulations. That's twenty bucks in what, a half hour? She nodded, happily. Just think, that's forty dollars an hour. That's 80,000 a year. You're on pace to make eighty thousand dollars this year.

Her mouth dropped. She had not thought of it this way before. Her face turned a shade pinker, and she turned around, ready to flag another pair of women down, but not before turning to face me again. Perhaps she wanted to say something nice to me, after I'd helped her put her incredible fortune in perspective. "You know, that smells soo good," she said, pointing at the source of my gristle. You hungry? You want some? I offered her the fork.

"No thanks. I can't eat meat right now," she declined, still bright from her sale, and turned back around. I thought about what her last sentence meant and kept eating. I frowned, realizing that I was the one that she had shared her special moment with, a moment that was validation for the passage of her youth.

As I wondered whether or not it was apparent to the people on the street that I was here in cahoots with this man and this woman who were relentlessly bothering them for money, a short, fat, bald man holding a map and wearing a fanny pack asked me for directions to Saint Patrick's Cathedral. I tried, but could offer him no advice. He started to walk back to his friends when I saw Steve waving his fingers over the list of salon services as a blonde listened intently. I called for the man to come back. You know, I can't tell you where it is, but you see that guy over there, in the blue shirt? Talking to the blonde woman? He's from around here. Go ask him. Still, the man returned to his friends, presumably uncomfortable with the idea of interrupting a man's business. I waved to him, nodded my head, gave him a thumbs-up. It's cool, I gestured, almost demandingly. At the urging of his party, I saw him tap Steve on the shoulder.

This was no beautiful woman who liked to take care of herself, and Steve was predictably, visibly annoyed. He brushed the man off coldly, and when he turned back to his prospective sale, the woman herself had begun to direct the man and his party. Seconds later, she herself walked away without having treated herself to $300 worth of salon services for only $59.95.

Finished with my lunch, I now sought another way to amuse myself. I decided to make some phone calls. Three minutes into a conversation with a friend that included two minutes of incredulous laughter, he began to chastise me. "What the hell are you still doing there? Francis! You have two degrees! You speak three languages! Leave right now, for Christ's sake."

Steve had made a sale, and Jenny ran over to me to tell me. "Look at The Man! Cash in hand. Cash." He came over, counting his twenty five dollars, a king surveying his riches. I smiled admiringly. Wow. It's a good day. "Oh, my friend, it's always a good day." He thought for a half second. "It's an outstanding day." He was amped by his sale, and began dancing back into the thick of the foot traffic. "Alright. Who's giving me money?" I heard him say to himself. It's just another outstanding day at Image.

Jenny tried again, with her stock approach. "Excuse me," she began, stepping directly in a woman's path and again twirling her thin hair, "where did you get your hair cut?" The woman sidestepped her and continued down the block with Jenny in tow. "Because I want to recommend my salon..." I saw her follow the woman for fifteen feet before she reached out and tugged at her sleeves, ignored the whole way until the tug produced a sharp, violent snap of the woman's arm. Then, remembering her sass, Jenny produced a dismissive "I didn't want to talk to you anyway" wave. She walked the twenty feet back to the corner too coolly, too slowly, with more attitude than is natural in her stride.

A weathered man with a ragged blanket—a glaring anomaly in the midtown streets—came and sat on the sidewalk, closer to the curb and to the speeding traffic than the Image representatives. After a moment, he produced an old cardboard sign, beat up from use, which read, simply: "Please help. Homeless / HIV +" He stared at his feet, and didn't look up when Steve stepped over him to ask another woman for money.

This was enough. I felt my symptoms clearing. I paled my face and let my eyelids droop, affecting a face of misery. When the woman walked away, I called to Steve and explained that I didn't feel well. I clutched my stomach for dramatic effect. "The food?!?" he exclaimed. I don't know. Maybe. I feel like hell. Is there a bathroom around here? He directed me to a pizzeria and I went. I came back and told him that I'd vomited. He told me to call the office to schedule another Day of Observation. I nodded. "You really need to see rush hour, and how we do business then.

This is nothing right here," he beamed. By the time I left, a half-hour after Jenny's triumphant sale, she had not made another one. That put her down to twenty dollars an hour, or 40,000 a year. As I entered the subway, still clutching my stomach, I looked to see another woman walk away from her. 40,000 and dropping.

Have you ever seen a moldy parsnip? It looks kind of like a carrot.

We DIG Books!

send books for review to *ProcessedWorld*, 41 Sutter Street, #1829, San Francisco, CA 94104. We are especially interested in social analyses of technology and work, the relationship between political economy and ecology, history, art, etc.

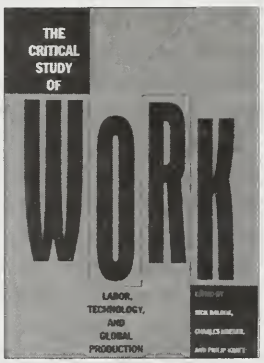
Reviewed by Chris Carlsson

The rhythm of daily life has dramatically changed over the past quarter century. Nowhere is this more glaring that at work. *ProcessedWorld* magazine was a rare voice questioning work's purpose and structure, especially from the subjective point of view of the workers themselves. This new issue was motivated in part by the eerie sense of silence about what is plainly going on all around us. The enormous expansion and redesign of work has gone largely ignored by the press and academia, except for claims that somehow we were living in a more exciting and "empowering" time than ever before.

The business press runneth over with competing management theories and strategies. Contradictions and conflict are as much a part of managing as they are of working. In spite of the clash of theories and practices, the overarching needs of capitalism to reproduce itself has thus far won out over any other social goal. The success or failure of a given capitalist enterprise is unimportant compared to the longer range success of "the system" in ensuring and extending its power and control over our lives. This persistent success is based in no small part on a continual churning and overturning of the structures of work so as to break down the rise of any alternative communities of workers that can mount a sustained challenge to the needs of profitability. Some of the mechanisms of this are relatively familiar: low wages, union-busting, illegal immigration as a wedge against labor shortages, etc.

In the past 25 years or so, the old style of managing workers by closely bossing them with front-line managers has been replaced by a more subtle system. The new structure facilitates a type of self-management in many kinds of work. This involves speeding up the pace and intensity of work with just-in-time production, imposing greater insecurity on workers through irregular scheduling and ending the notion of a "permanent job." Contract labor, team-based processes and tight deadlines make the individual worker responsible for managing the completion of specific tasks.

To some extent this reflects the success of capitalism in absorbing the energy of previous generations of workers' revolt. The 20th century dependence on assembly line structures in which work was deskilled, routinized and rendered increasingly measurable by supervisorial oversight led to a huge increase in absenteeism, shoddy production, and what has been known as a "revolt against work." In the mid-1970s, a body of work emerged detailing the "Fordist" or "Taylorist" model of production, and its function in controlling workers.



The Critical Study of Work: Labor, Technology, and Global Production
Edited by Rick Baldoz, Charles Koeber, and Philip Kraft
Temple University Press, Philadelphia PA: 2001

Out of sight, toiling in universities, critical scholars are extending this analysis, studying the Great Speedup that characterizes the last quarter of the 20th century. ***The Critical Study of Work*** presents an insightful and refreshing inquiry by over a dozen writers. The critiques are usually rooted in the "labor process theory" developed in the wake of Harry Braverman's 1974 classic *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. Braverman made a compelling case that the unique nature of human labor and capitalist production led to the organization of modern life that we have today. The editors summarize Braverman's analysis, showing that the design of work in the 20th century was meant to

> "continuously replace each generation of workers with another and to expand "productive," that is waged, relations to all spaces, public and private, where they do not yet exist. . . The whole capitalist labor process is simultaneously technical, ideological and political: the production process itself is a form of class struggle." (p. 10, "Making Sense of Work in the Twenty-First Century" *The Critical Study of Work*)

In the same introduction, the editors characterize one of the book's central points:

> "Increased flexibility for employers translates into

> longer work days not just for minimum-wage contingent workers in sweatshops, but also for technical and administrative workers in twenty-four hour-time-zone production chains. . . Firms with marketing and sales departments in New York or Frankfurt and research and design facilities in the Silicon Valley or Geneva can continually shop for the cheapest contract manufacturers in Ireland or Brazil or Penang or China. High-fashion clothing designers in New York and Milan hire manufacturing subcontractors in the United States and Italy, who in turn can choose between sweatshops in China—or Chinatown."

The "new economy" and "globalization" receive the glare of sustained criticism in this important volume. In San Francisco we have been in the eye of the new economy hurricane, and have long been a capitalist headquarters city from which globalization has been planned and carried out. Standard Oil of California, Bechtel Engineering—and until recently Bank of America and Del Monte Foods—call San Francisco home. Silicon Valley's electronic giants are just fifty miles south. While political campaigns decrying this abuse or that unethical investment have risen and fallen over the years, this book digs deeper, with case studies of the emerging organization of work that multinational companies have helped design and implement.

Michael Buroway, inspired by Braverman and others, sets out in the first essay to explore the subjective experiences of work, trying to understand not why workers shirk work but why workers work as hard as they do. He worked in a Chicago machine shop, in Hungary, and in the former Soviet Union, labeling the different types of workplace organization as "hegemony" and "despotism."The concept of despotism recurs in other essays, too. The somewhat jargonistic term "flexible despotism" is the rubric describing the current era.

In "Flexible Despotism: The Intensification of Insecurity and Uncertainty in the lives of Silicon Valley's High-Tech Assembly Workers," Jennifer JiHye Chun poses the issue clearly.

> "How do flexible production regimes actually create, maintain, and reproduce worker consent to the stress and insecurity associated with the drive for flexibility, particularly in a global economy in which constant adaptation to change is directly associated with survival?"

The question of consent is crucial to our era. After all, we work many more hours, with more household members having to work, today than at any time since the 19th century (see "Farce or Figleaf" in this issue). It seems unlikely that we would agree to work longer and harder for essentially similar standards of living if we saw it as externally imposed on us, especially by the owners of business. Why do we go along with this? Chun again:

> "Employers in flexible despotic regimes attempt to mask the coercive character of their labor control strategies through two types of labor regimes: subcontracting and contract manufacturing. In both regimes, they tie workers' need for work to their performance on the job by stressing the "voluntary" nature of worker consent to the chaotic and unpredictable demands of flexible production."

The flexibility demanded depends on the global reach of production facilities, the just-in-time systems of subcontracting components and materials from other companies, and use of temporary, contingent workers, often immigrants and women, at low wages. Even in higher wage sectors like software production, flexibility has led to widely dispersed members of product development teams, with for example, programmers in Ireland working with a program designer in St. Louis and graphic designers in San Francisco. Such interdependence across geographic space reinforces an apparently voluntary engagement with tight deadlines and huge workloads.

Three essays in the concluding section of *The Critical Study of Work* examine professional and technical workers, focusing on the control of technical workers. Nowadays work imposes its own discipline through the use of contract labor, the assembling of specialized teams to create specific products, working unpaid and unavoidable overtime (accepted in part due to the teamwork concept in which workers become beholden to each other to meet impossible deadlines). The urgency faced by each worker to successfully complete the project is reinforced by the need to move on from the current job to the next, move horizontally to a new employer or project, bid up the value of skills—and the fear of falling that accompanies any time out of the technical workplace.

This is a crucial analysis of how the system holds itself together while making the structure of work and the social relations surrounding it appear to be inevitable and "natural." From the high-end programmers and technical writers all the way to fastfood workers (the subject of the other two books reviewed here), personal insecurity regarding the next job, or to having enough hours of paid work (or variations on that theme), drive people to accept adverse conditions of overwork, unpaid overtime, and severe disruptions to anything resembling a "normal" life outside of work.

We have just seen the meltdown of the New Economy stock values, bemoaned in the press and either lamented or cheered in local communities. This book illustrated the way capitalist markets "shake out" over time, purging "inefficient" and unprofitable businesses—and business practices. San Francisco during the boom was ground zero for new work patterns based on team projects, contract and temp work, and equally high levels of transience, wages and bravado. For a couple of years these businesses thrived on millions of dollars of venture capital, on balance producing very little of value. The dotcom crash is not merely about purging weak businesses with no products, but, importantly, about imposing insecurity and fear on a subset of the working class which had grown cocky and even proprietary when it actually

owned nothing, and produced relatively little, with skills that were temporarily rare and highly paid.

Many web workers used to $50,000+ salaries will have to accept far less to get regular work again, unless they have augmented their capabilities with database programming or other skills. Regardless, the collapse of value in this sector will lower wages for such work. The highly flexible and transient workforce will find it difficult to contest lower wages when constantly threatened with prolonged unemployment. Web work is being made easier (i.e. "deskilled"). The convergence of WYSIWYG ("what you see is what you get") web design tools (software like Dreamweaver and Frontpage) and a steady increase in the number of recently trained "web designers" assures that the computer know-how of this recently richly rewarded sector will become more common and less expensive.

A similar process took place in the 1980s among early operators of "word processing machines" who had found double wages over their previous employment as secretaries and typists. For a brief period word processing was a "with-it" modern sounding job. Then it became the back office clerical plantation job. Will web designers follow the same path? The dotcom meltdown might be best understood as a mechanism to quickly alter downward the "deal" offered a small part of the working population.

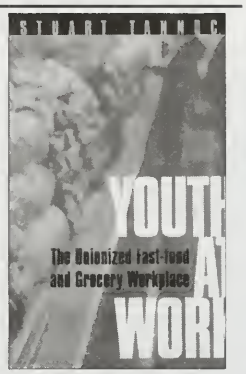
The contingent nature of new work structures profoundly impacts human connections. A 50-60 hour work week, leaves little time at home, with family, friends or neighbors. This in turn limits the ability to form the human bonds that help grow the spaces in which resistance and revolt can develop. Would less intense, less fragmented work lead to the formation of a stronger sense of class and the growth of oppositional political movements? We can't know the answer, but we do know that the new structures of work produce harried, isolated and exhausted people. The short duration of shared work experiences precludes the kinds of connections that allow for trust and mutual aid to grow beyond the most basic kinds of human solidarity (e.g. helping a coworker take a long enough bathroom break, talk to a sick child on the phone, etc.)

Still, workers find ways to connect and help each other out. In "Silent Rebellions in the Capitalist Paradise: A Brazil-Quebec Comparison," Angelo Soares takes a look at strategies of mutual aid and resistance by female supermarket cashiers in Quebec and Brazil. He documents a rich vein of strategies by workers in both locales that protect them from supervisors and unpleasant customers. The women who preside at the check-out counters stand astride a crucial point of capitalist reproduction: the moment where one exchanges hard-earned wages for the goods required to live. As Soares puts it, "the difficult transition between the Garden of Eden and the brutality of the marketplace."

The actual behaviors undertaken are familiar and even trivial when taken in isolation, but Soares argues that the

> "daily strategies of resistance form a constant struggle that uses such simple and ordinary weapons as dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, foot dragging, sabotage, work-to-rule, solidarity, absenteeism, and more radically, quitting. Thus, just as millions of anthozoan polyps create, willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do the multiple acts of worker insubordination and evasion create political and economic barrier reefs of their own and these... in a certain way, have a shielding effect against oppression, violence, and exploitation at work."

Youth At Work: The Unionized Fast-food and Grocery Workplace
By Stuart Tannock, Temple Univ. Press, Philadelphia, PA: 2001



Supermarket workers get a different but close look in ***Youth at Work: The Unionized Fast-food and Grocery Workplace***. Stuart Tannock examines the condition of work in low-wage, high-turnover service sector jobs in fast food and supermarkets. He shows that the fact that these jobs typically employ young people is no justification for the lousy conditions and low pay on which they depend. He examines the condition of youth *as workers*, in itself a radical departure from the rest of the literature in the field, which prefers to look at this sector of the working class as "youth" (reproducing the academic aversion in the U.S. to "class" as a meaningful concept). He spends the first part of the book criticizing the four areas of previous sociological data that have attempted to understand youth work: youth labor market, school-to-work, student-worker, and social-reproduction.

We read a detailed analysis of unionized "Fry House" fastfood workplaces in the pseudonymously named town of "Glenwood" (Canada) and unionized supermarkets in "Box Hill" (U.S.). Tannock's analysis is a breath of fresh air in a field of sociological blather that usually reproduces platitudes in the service of the captains of industry. The kind of sociology that puts out a false, ideological account of work is simply insulting to anyone who actually works. His research brought back memories of his own restaurant work experiences. From the preface:

> "Restaurants can be miserable places to work. Managers micro-manage, ride high on tinpot power trips, and act as if they have no clue about what life is really like on the restaurant floor. . . time seems to career endlessly from panicked rush to deadened emptiness, so that if you're not having to handle the stress of a fast-packed workday, you're having to figure out how on earth you're going to get through the monotony of a

seemingly never-ending six-hour shift. [. . .] Workers constantly come and go, and in an at-will work environment, managers can fire staff whenever and wherever they desire."

But he knows there are some redeeming aspects to the work, too.

"For all the asshole managers and pinhead customers I had in my restaurant career, I also had some awesome managers and many favorite customers."

He shows that the notion that fastfood restaurant employment teaches young people self-discipline and how to be good workers in future employment is absurd. This whole sector of the economy depends on a permanent supply of low-wage stopgap youth workers. Tannock insists that the currently underpaid, degraded working conditions of youth workers are the responsibility of the so-called "secondary labor market" employers. He devotes a good deal of space to examining unionized workplaces as a way for "stopgap" workers to gain some control over their work experiences and see real improvements.

As a sociological study this book offers an abundance of detailed, on-the-ground stories. From the ways different fastfood stores in the same chain differ from one another due to different work cultures, to the very different styles of unionism between the U.S.-based supermarket union and the Canadian union of fastfood workers, Tannock has done his homework. As efforts to organize and improve conditions continue to emerge among low-wage service sector workers, particularly young people, this book is an indispensable resource.

His research gives more evidence of the emerging design of work. Here he cites James Barker (writing in 1993 in a magazine called *Administrative Science Quarterly*) who is calling it "concertive control":

> "[Concertive control] represents a key shift in the locus of control from management to workers themselves, who collaborate to develop the means of their own control. . . Concertive control becomes manifest as . . . team members act within the parameters of value systems and the discourses they themselves create. These new collaboratively created, value-laden premises (manifest as ideas, norms, and rules) become the supervisory force that guides activity in the concertive control system."

Tannock continues

> "Most Fry House outlets in Glenwood operate without a full-time, in-store managerial presence—and some outlets are left for months to run themselves without any store manager at all. Fry House ensures that workers will work hard, first, by deliberately fostering a sense of team membership, store ownership, and distinctive store-based identity system among its employees; and second, by using a "just-in-time" labor system, cutting work hours so tightly that workers have to cooperate closely and work hard simply to make it through the workday."

Tannock humanizes the subtle distinctions that exist even among workers in one of the most carefully designed work regimes of our time.

Fast Food Nation spends a chapter illustrating the conditions "Behind the Counter" and in the process corroborates a good deal of the research presented in greater detail by Tannock. Eric Schlosser does a brief case study of a teenager who works in a Colorado Springs McDonalds. Her workday, starting at 5:15 a.m. on weekends, and including weekday shifts, fills up a great deal of her life. Little time is left for schoolwork and even less for a "normal" teenage social life. Teachers are quoted about students falling asleep in class, failing to finish homework assignments, etc., often due to employment at nearby fast food franchises.

The Muscle Hustle

While you're outside flipping the meat, the beef industry is inside your pants lowering your sperm count. There's nothing virile about cancer of the bowel and nothing masculine about eating farm animals. Don't buy the bull.

Doug Minkler

Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal

By Eric Schlosser
Houghton Mifflin, NY, NY: 2001

Not only are the youthful fastfood workers finding their education compromised, they are not gaining any real skills. At a conference profiled by Schlosser fastfood executives agreed that "zero training" is the industry's goal—to be achieved by relying on photographs of menu items. "[I]f there are instructions, make them very simple, write them at a fifth-grade level, and write them in Spanish and English." (p. 72) Everyone knows how McDonalds insists that its franchise operators follow centralized directives on every aspect of running a franchise, right down to the size of the pickle slices to the circumference of the paper cups.

Schlosser has written an impressive book. He details the impact of fast food on the eating habits of Americans, including its contribution to the soaring obesity rate. He takes a hard look at the political economy of fast food, its connection to suburbanization, sprawl and car culture. The restaurant industry, he notes, is the single largest contributor to right-wing Republicans in Congress, who in turn have led the fight to keep the minimum wage down (it is now *40% less* in real terms than it was in the early 1970s). During the last 25 years of a falling real minimum wage the fast food industry has expanded enormously. No other industry depends so completely on low wage workers.

Meanwhile, the fast food industry has grown so large so fast that it has affected many aspects of the American economy. Potato farming, cattle ranching, meatpacking, public health and marketing, all have been radically altered by the rise of the fast food industry. Meatpacking has been widely de-unionized since the early 1980s. (In *ProcessedWorld* #30 I reviewed Barbara Kopple's fascinating documentary *American Dream*, which documents the sordid demise of Local P-9, the meatpacking union at Hormel's Austin, Minnesota factory.) Due to intensification, speedup and the employment of non-union immigrant labor, meatpacking is once again one the nation's most dangerous jobs, plagued with enormous accident rates. Moreover, the practice of slaughtering and preparing meat has led to a growing public health crisis, as deadly pathogens like *E.coli* routinely appear in ground beef (dozens of food poisoning outbreaks are documented). As Schlosser pungently puts it: "There's shit in the meat" and he means it quite literally, backing up his sickening assertion with a 1996 USDA study that found 78.6% of ground beef contained microbes that are spread primarily by fecal material.

Fast Food Nation is a *tour de force* and a great read. For any of us fighting creeping monoculture, the corporatization of everyday life, and the subjection of human values to those of the market, this book is as galling as it is inspiring.

Mapping Cyberspace

By Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchen
Routledge
NY, NY: 2001

reviewed by Primitivo Morales

Geographic space has always been an issue—moving ourselves, messages or goods from point "A" to point "B" has seen constant technological innovation. Modern aspects range from "urban sprawl" (cars) and "globalization" (telecommunications; containerization; jets) to issues of access (the Americans With Disabilities Act) and control (see, for instance Mike Davis' *City of Quartz*).

The popularization of the Internet has led to some new possibilities: some have seen the advent of global communities which ignore spatial constraints; others predict the disappearance of local politics and community. Clashes between the "old" spatially defined units, such as countries, and the new "borderless" world of the web are seen in the daily press: U.S. edicts that attempt to control the whole world; attempts by some states to ban the sale of items found to be criminal in their countries (e.g. Nazi paraphernalia, items offensive to certain religions, etc.). Certain forms of surveillance seem to also take on much wider implications (the NSA/GCHQ system known as "Echelon," which monitors international telecommunications, and the F.B.I.'s "Cerberus," which monitors e-mail and other Internet traffic).

An ambitious new book by Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchen, ***Mapping Cyberspace*** addresses some of these issues in the course of extending cartography to "Information and Communication Technologies (hereafter referred to as ICTs), or to "cyberspace," borrowing a term from science fiction writer William Gibson. Summarizing hundreds of studies and books in fields as diverse as philosophy, cartography, sociology, psychology and literary theory, this books covers a lot of (virtual) ground.

They define cyberspace as "the *conceptual space* within ICTs, rather than the technology itself. ... [C]yberspace does not consist of one homogeneous space; it is a myriad of rapidly expanding cyberspaces, each providing a different form of digital interaction and communication. In general, these spaces can be categorized into ... the Internet, those within

virtual reality, and conventional telecommunications[.]" The focus of the book is on the first two the Internet and virtual reality.

There's way too much in this book to cover here —they examine ways of mapping geographical use of the Internet, the circadian rhythm of global telecommunications and Internet usage, methods of charting interaction in chat rooms or in email, as well MUDs and MOOs ("Multi-User Domains," which are text-based worlds that users share, and "Multi-User Object Oriented Environments," which may present a visual interface, and allow users to change the environment). They've got a good selection of illustrations, and the book has a rich bibliography and lots of links to relevant Internet sites (their address is www.MappingCyberspace.com).

Of particular interest to the non-cartographer/non-Internet techie, is the second chapter, "Geographies of the information society," which examines "how the development and use of ICTs and cyberspace effects socio-spatial relations." One aspect is global culturalization: the "new global village" anticipated by Marshall McLuhan. Citing several studies, they find that the village would seem to be "largely constructed and dominated by American desires, values and practices." It reflects a view of the world that is based on linear perspective and objective realism. Cyberspace also contributes to "global corporate restructuring and increased market penetration," and incidentally restructures urban landscapes so they are all the same. This promises to be particularly true of so called "soft-cities" like Singapore, parts of London and Dublin — soft because they depend more on information that industrial production. "This sameness is the result of decentering of production and consumption accompanied by homogenous, satellite development; gentrification in the form of reworking the old and unique into the new and the same; and new buildings adopting architectural pastiches that do not relate to local, historical styles." In fairness, they also look at a countervailing trend: "Western cities seem to be developing in two directions simultaneously. At one level, they are becoming less distinct, more global and more homogenous; at another

take photographs in McDonalds!

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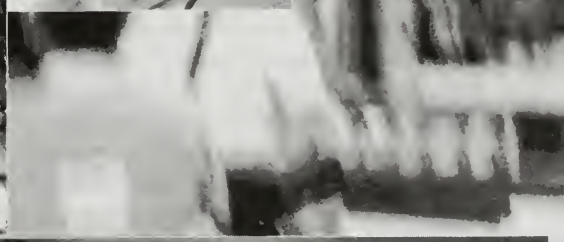

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photos by David Green

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level, they are trying to market themselves as unique locales, set apart from other places, in order to attract consumption. What emerges is a complex interplay between the local and the global; the authentic and the inauthentic, between place and placelessness." (It is left to the reader to describe where our recent project, *Shaping San Francisco*, a multimedia history of SF, might lie.)

The impact of ICTs on a sense of community is also examined. The ability of people to develop virtual communities may be an antidote to living in places which people have no connection to; or these new on-line communities may be an escape hatch which serves to weaken existing local communities. Cyberspace may also be used to reconnect people to the place they live in (again, projects such as SSF), and may also be an extension of a person's geographic space, just as telephones and postal letters can tie people together. Projects such as Santa Monica's PEN (Public Electronic Networks) and Montana's Big Sky Telegraph are examples of publicly visible networks based on a shared geography. They cite a number of studies showing that new communities are also being formed: "...subcultures, centered on cyberpunk and youth movements which meet in cyberspace, cybercafes, nightclubs and communes, and whose materialistic practices are grounded in computer use, rave, ambient and industrial music, smart or designer drugs, science-fiction writing, and calls for cultural and political change."They point out that these are found in only a few areas— Amsterdam, London, the San Francisco area..

The effects of ICTs on political structures and movements are questioned: do they lead to a possibility that representative government could be replaced by direct government? Or might they mean the death of place-based mobilizations? Or might they serve to reinforce existing structures? Examples range from the highly visible "War of ink and Internet" waged by the Zapatistas and their supporters, to homeless people in Santa Monica who used PEN to pressure the city into providing shower facilities. The Zapatista campaign seems to indicate a deconstruction of some aspects of nationality, even as it is based on a very geographic space, the Lacandon region of southern Mexico.

Of course, governments are not exactly lying still — some have imposed controls on use of Internet technology (China, Singapore, etc.), while in other countries (the U.S., western Europe) it seems that the digital traces left by routine transactions are all grist for the powers-that-be, whether for "market research" or active surveillance. From details on work performance (key-stroke counting and monitoring breaks), on consumer choices, from education and health records, from one's correspondence and reading habits, private and public cops can amass a wealth of detail on people.

They also deal with the fond illusion of grass-roots access to the technology: "Cyberspace is patently not accessible to all. For example, in 1996 . . . 50 percent of all US Internet hosts were located in just five states . . . This pattern, although weakening continues to exist [in 2000] . . . Cyberspace usage, and therefore benefits . . . are fragmented along traditional spatial and social divisions." Not surprisingly, a number of studies have found cyberspace to be the playground of white middle-class males who speak English; although the profile has broadened somewhat in recent years, cyberspace is just another dividing line between the "haves" and "have-nots." ICTs also seem to be contributing to an increased divide between countries, as well.

Of course, workers still are needed in the "post-industrial" age, and ICTs make it possible for them to be located far from their traditional stomping grounds. Tele-cottages and tele-communting are only part of the picture— call centers allow support operations in Dublin or India to service U.S. customers at a fraction of the cost of U.S. wages and costs. These routine and tightly monitored economies have additional costs: according to a 1998 U.N. report, Ireland now has the greatest income polarization in Europe. The income gap between men and women has increased, and that the number of children living in poverty has doubled since 1971. Wages in Dublin, for instance, have increased by some 17.6 percent between 1992 and 1997, while housing costs have increased 231 percent between 1994 and 1999.

And that's just from the first 60 pages of this book (out of some 220). They do eventually get down to the more prosaic challenge of describing the formal topic of the book, representations of cyberspace. Building on recent innovations in cartography, they look at number of attempts to represent cyberspace, focusing on five key issues: "How "accurate" is the map? Is the map interpretable? What does the map *not* tell us? Why was the map drawn? Is the map ethical?"

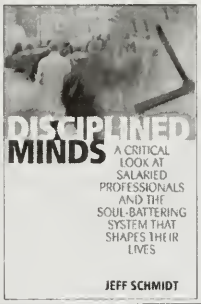
They look at ways to represent traffic flow and usage of the Internet, ways to represent the results of searches, and methods of visually showing interactions among people in email, USENET and chat rooms. They also cover projects such as Alphaworld (a 3-d visual representation of a virtual city and environs) and the use of "avatars" (software simulacra) to represent one's self. One of the final chapters is on "Spatial cognition in cyberspace," in which they sum up research on how people find their way in the real world, and look at applications of that knowledge to cyberspace. One difference in getting around in cyberspace, which any user of web sites must surely recognize, is that something like half of all navigational moves are users backing up to find their way to someplace else! A far cry from our ability to maneuver in cities and other "real world" environments.

They finish off with a detailed analysis of dozens of cyberpunk and science-fiction books using a computerized semantic analysis to isolate major themes and ideas.

This book is a little dry at times, in part because they are summing up so much research in so little space. It's an illuminating read if you're interested in the political and social effects of cyberspace, or if you have a technical interest in representing this new world.

Three and half stars! Check it out!

Disciplined Minds:
A CRITICAL LOOK AT SALARIED PROFESSIONALS AND THE SOUL-BATTERING SYSTEM THAT SHAPES THEIR LIVES
By Jeff Schmidt
Rowman and Littlefield
NY, NY: 2001



A lot lurks beneath the workplace goal of professionalism. The popular and technical meanings of "professional" interact to reveal a whole world of social relations. One of the most important is that "professional" isn't an appearance—it's a way of life. An excellent book by Jeff Schmidt, *"Disciplined Minds"* examines both the social role and the training of the professional. Even more importantly, he gives a whole slew of techniques for resisting professionalism in college and at work.

He writes that "[o]ne of this book's goals is to deconstruct the minimum requirements that make a person a professional. ... As professionals become a bigger segment of the forces of production, so the production of professionals becomes a bigger activity in society ... The supposed political neutrality of the process of professional qualification [is] a myth ... The ideological obedience that the qualification system requires for success turns out to be identical to the ideological obedience that characterizes the work of the salaried professional."

He presents intriguing ideas about the differences between expectations and ideals and the realities settled for. Even MBAs would demand more money to work for a tobacco company than for a non-profit. Women are less likely to be bought off than men, which, he opines, may contribute to the "glass-ceiling" that keeps women from upper management.

He disposes of the popular myth of the left-wing/liberal leanings of professionals. Using polls during the Korean and Vietnam wars he demonstrates that the percentage of people who supported these wars goes up with educational level. Although some studies have shown professionals to more liberal on broadly posed social questions, when actual issues of work-place hierarchy arise, the veneer strips away. With only about five percent of all full-time college professors considering themselves left of the conservative-liberal mainstream (the number of right-wingers is about 0.4 percent), it's hard to see why universities have such leftist reputations.

> "For understanding the professional, the concept of 'ideology' will emerge as much more useful that that of 'skill.' But what is ideology exactly? Ideology is thought that justifies action ... Economics may bring you back to your employer day after day, but it is ideology that makes that activity feel like a reasonable or unreasonable way to spend your life.
>
> "Work in general is becoming more and more ideological, and so is the workforce that does it. ... Of course, ideology has been a workplace issue all along: Employers have always scrutinized the attitudes and values of the people they hire, to protect themselves ... Today, however, for a relatively small but rapidly growing fraction of jobs, employers will carefully assess your attitude for an additional reason: its crucial role in the work itself. On these jobs, which are in every field, from journalism and architecture to education and commercial art, your view of the world threatens to affect not only the quantity and quality of what you produce, but also the very nature of the product. ... [A] prerequisite for employment is the willingness and ability to exercise what I call ideological discipline."

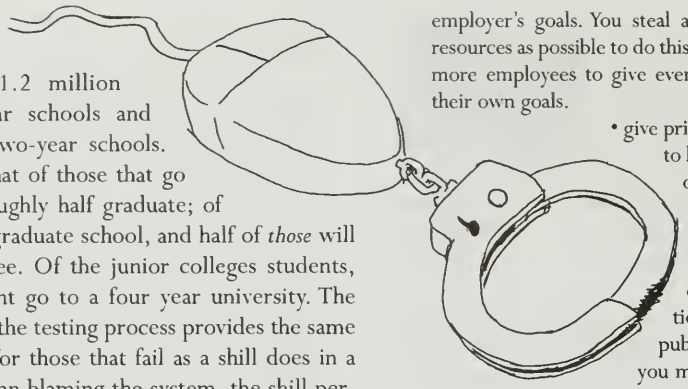
He also explores the concept of "assignable curiosity" as a hallmark of the successful professional. Scientists and researchers must restrict their curiosity to narrow areas of interest to their masters; at the same time there is a remarkable ability to invent good reasons to delve into narrow—but useful—areas of study.

Not all modern offices are dominated by professionals, and so to some extent the material in this book may be less applicable outside academia. I work for a dot-com, and there are no doubt some advanced degrees present, but the fields of computers and information technology have expanded so rapidly that credentialed workers (i.e. those stamped and certified by the graduate degree programs) are often hard to find. Many technologies have evolved more rapidly than the standard education, and event the most current degree could be outmoded in a few years. OJT (on the job training) is far more likely to be necessary to keep up on new developments. The very nature of the work tends to draw people with a similar problem-solving desire, and often a similar background. That in turn "selects" and filters much like graduate school. Although the "how" may be unusually flexible, the "why" is not.

After showing why the workplace requires certain traits, Schmidt visits the standardized tests so familiar to U.S. high schools. He does an excellent job of showing why these tests are inherently biased (and, indeed, must be so), not merely due to content—which Educational Testing Service et. al. try to correct—but because of the structure and demands of the questions. By selecting for those students who are willing to work artificial problems within a very constricted time frame and produce the correct formula (often an answer learned by rote from studying other tests), the system winnows out those not willing to conform to artificial rules. It deems most valuable those who know "how" rather than "why."The tests provide a façade of neutrality, allowing the student to make decisions about his or her future based on seemingly objective facts.

Statistics show that most potential professionals will fail. In 1997 some 2.8 million people graduated from high

school while a half million didn't finish. On the graduates, 1.2 million enrolled in four year schools and another 630,000 in two-year schools. Other studies show that of those that go to 4-year colleges, roughly half graduate; of those, half will go to graduate school, and half of *those* will get an advanced degree. Of the junior colleges students, only about five percent go to a four year university. The apparent neutrality of the testing process provides the same sort of "cooling out" for those that fail as a shill does in a classic sting. Rather than blaming the system, the shill persuades the "mark" to blame himself, or fate. In the same way that a con game can't be won by most players, so to is graduate school a goal that won't be attained by most students.



graphic by R.L. Tripp

The concept of legitimacy holds sway in professionaldom; subordination to authority is a central component. It's common for such workers to be aware of the effect of their work on the world, but it is very uncommon for them to move beyond criticism and sarcasm. Schmidt quotes Max Horkeimer: "Well-informed cynicism is only another mode of conformity." It serves to palliate the worst threats to a professional's world by encapsulating such issues in a funny wrapper, discarding any alternatives as "unrealistic." In the end, even if they wanted to, there is no way for them to actually do anything.

> "Professionals are angry about such abuses of power, but having no vision of how power in the schools, in the workplace and the larger society could be distributed more democratically, they naturally look for ways to make the present hierarchical power structures work. Here the choices are limited—restaff the hierarchy with 'better people' or give those at the top even more power so they can 'act decisively.' So even the most well-meaning individuals end up reinventing some such elitist or authoritarian solution. ... Those who have no vision of greater democracy are paralyzed even further by the individualism inherent in their outlook. They retreat in fear at the mere suggestion of joining with others ..." [B]ecause of the threat to their idealized images of themselves as rugged individuals.

The most valuable sections borrow from, among other sources, U.S. Army doctrine for Prisoners of War to help resist brainwashing. The techniques and methods—33 in number—which may allow the "radical professional" (and those radicals who to have to deal with professionals) are a refreshing antidote to the usual weak palliatives offered in many books. They range from fairly innocuous to quite visible and even dangerous, and include:

- encourage coworkers to connect themselves with radical organizations and to read and subscribe to radical publications. You circulate anti-establishment periodicals, or selected articles from them ...
- assign your own curiosity. On the job, you develop and pursue your own goals while supposedly pursuing your employer's goals. You steal as much time and as many resources as possible to do this. You encourage the hiring of more employees to give everyone more time to pursue their own goals.
- give priority, during working hours, to helping coworkers with their own self-assigned, politically progressive projects.
- channel as much useful information as possible, especially inside information, to opposition groups, publications and individuals ... you may have to act anonymously ... [which] does not mean acting alone—that you only do when there is no other way. ...
- sharpen and deepen your coworkers' dissatisfaction with the restrictions on their work ...
- help organize a union. After all, management is organized and sticks together to defend its interests.
- hire coworkers on the basis of character ...
- work to abolish professionals. That is, you work to eliminate the professional/nonprofessional division of labor
- undermine management's information advantage ...

The author, a long-time friend of *PW*, was fired for writing this book. The pretext was his first paragraph in the introduction: "This book is stolen. Written in part on stolen time, that is." He details the problems he had in physics graduate school at U.C. Irvine, in particular running afoul of a professor (and science fiction writer), Gregory Benford, who apparently took offense at Schmidt's politics, and campaigned to get Schmidt fired. Let this be a warning and an inspiration. Go out and buy a couple copies for friends. 4 stars!

"Flight and Other Stories" is a great collection of short stories, just released by the University of Nevada Press (2001, ISBN 0-87414-359-0). The author, José Skinner, focuses mostly on the varieties of experience of Latinos in the United States. Amidst echoes of foreign conflicts (Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador) a varied cast —a former junkie, an Hispanic-named lawyer who has virtually no latino heritage, school kids, marijuana smugglers, lovers and adulterers—inhabits diverse landscapes. The recent US census shows that an ever larger area of this country is drawing its labor force from immigrants from Mexico and Central America, and with those workers come changes in food and music, as well as changes in identity. I'm taken with "Age of Copper," a story that is mostly a flashback to a young Chilenos' adolescence as a newcomer to the U.S. during the Allende period (1970-73). The protagonist's presentation of himself, and his own ambivalences, are delicately explored. José's book is a good read, illuminating the small victories and defeats of daily life. *—P. Morales*

Already A Winner!

by "Thomas Daulton"

Time to start murdering rats, Tony thought grimly. Late again, nervous, sweating, Tony bumbled past the receptionists, wearing his sheepish half-smile. He attempted the best tiptoe he could muster, while hurrying to his cubicle, with arms straining around a half-case of StimuSoda and a pair of those absurdly noisy cellophane grocery bags hanging from each.

Loud indistinct voices clashed angrily from behind the closed conference room door near the RatScan company lobby. But Tony kept walking tiptoe anyway, with those damn crinkling bags. Bad enough that he had to waste the precious lunch hour between his two jobs, shopping on a Saturday when it was the most crowded. But it had to be done today—or wait 'til Thursday, his day off from ConTek. Damned if he was gonna boil that last egg at home, unless he had ketchup to go with it....! The toast and maybe an instant soup... What else had he bought? Had he even checked the sweepstakes on the receipt?

That was the one thought that could break through the residual panic left-over from his tardy entrance. If he'd won anything, and hurried right back, maybe the clerk would recognize him and let him claim his prize! Eyes crusty with fatigue, he groped for the small piece of paper buried among the cereal and processed cheese.

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THANK YOU FOR SHOPPING QUEEZEE-MART™
15:57:48 SATURDAY, JULY 29, 2017
CLERK #: 1138 (F.J. DINWIDDLE)
MILKLOFAT1/2GAL              $ 16.75
SNEEZCHEEZ8oz                $ 11.32
COUPON                       $- 0.50
OOZINGNOODLE 16@5.75 =       $ 92.00
HONYBLSTCEREAL               $ 28.39
DEHYDRATOAST                 $ 32.74
STIMUSODA1/2CASE             $ 37.25
TRKYTRIPESALAMI              $ 83.94
OATBRANYOGHRT 4@      8.95=$ 35.80
INSTAKETCHUP8oz              $ 12.95
     SUBTOTAL                $350.64
     TAX @0.155              $ 54.35
     TOTAL                   $404.99
     -DEBIT CARD             $404.99

SORRY! YOU WERE NOT A WINNER THIS TIME.
PLEASE COME AGAIN & PLAY QUEEZEE-
MART™'S ALL-YOU-CAN-SCARF SWEEPSTAKES!!
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No big surprise there, he conceded. Wearily Tony flopped into his chair, leaned his head back, and wondered how he'd survive another 8-hour shift.

"Tony?" Pam Ganio, the receptionist, called his name and hesitantly stuck her head into his cubicle. Another minute and he would probably have dozed off like that, if she hadn't roused him. Wouldn't the Veep like to find *that* when he got out of his meeting? He fell forward out of his reverie.

"Pam! I was halfway zonked. I guess I'm still warming-up today." Pam always seemed calm and well-rested; she'd won a lifetime train-pass in a sweepstakes months ago. She probably catnapped during her commute between jobs. Tony spent his time tearing his hair out stuck in traffic. "What did you need?"

"Oh, nothing much... Just passing out paychecks..." she offered him a sealed envelope.

'Nothing much', is right, honey... he fought back the urge to snicker. *Two miserable data-entry jobs and part-time mail-stuffing at home. I get by on a measly $95K a year because I live off instant soup and turkey tripe salami. Hell, if I wanted more pay, I'd REALLY have to put in serious hours; I like my sleep too much for that.* Tony ripped straight through the typed lettering, "TONY WALL—CONFIDENTIAL", with a crooked finger.

The conference room door opened, releasing a wave of grumbling people in suits. Pam sprang back to her reception desk with the deliberate grace of a young doe, in time to hand stacks of phone-message slips to the meeting participants. The last to exit, a portly man in a faded brown suit, bypassed Pam and trudged towards Tony's cubicle.

He paused to snap at another records manager, who was copying a stack of forms. "Get a bennie to do that! Your time is more valuable than theirs!" Hurriedly, she changed places with the nearest bennie. The bennies were workers whose *only* compensation was the company's medical or insurance package. Students or interns. Tony remembered what that was like, before he got his bio-statistics degree. It made for a long day, classes plus eight hours of work for no pay, but it was just a matter of preference. It depended which privilege—health care, housing, or transportation—you were most afraid of losing.

Terrified, the bennie worked the copy machine like an oarsman on a Roman galley. Tony pretended not to watch, vainly trying to resist his vulgar instinct for entertainment. The bennie was just another loser, and it never helped anything to pay attention to losers. At least you could pull yourself up from the downtrodden masses if you worked hard.

As the Veep approached, Tony hastily began the steps necessary to bring a big stack of numbers onto his computer screen, so it'd look like he'd been interrupted from something important. He launched the company's proprietary analysis program, and stabbed a red button inset into his desk

repeatedly, while his boss closed the distance to his cubicle.

In response to his frantic entreaty, a lab rat from a specific sample population in the lower sub-basement was corralled by mechanical arms. It was stuffed into a laser diffracting spectroscope and flash-vaporized. As the lasers shone through the airborne rat particles, the animal's genetic code flashed across Tony's screen:

```
AGTA CCTA GAGT = 0.56% GTTA CAAC
TGAA = 1.02% TACT GGTA AATG = 2.02%
GATG TCTG ACTG = 2.10% TTAC TGTA
AGAT = 2.95% CGGC ATTC TCAG = 3.10%
CGAT GACT ACCG = 3.25% CGGC ACGA
TAGC = 4.01% GACC TGAT CAAG = 4.02%
```

"When did you get into that BattleQuick stuff?" Mr. Storn asked. The Veep hovered behind Tony's desk a moment, as if to heighten the anticipation. "I thought I transferred you out of the Army-contract division."

"Oh, uh, I'm not—not really," he stammered, "Chris just got a funny result yesterday and asked me to take a quick look at it." He pressed a few more keys and the rat's chromosomal epitaph scrolled off his screen. "What's up, Mr. Storn?" he looked up at his boss with an amiable expression.

"It's crisis time for that Thoro-Sporidichlora-Cyanase-D Inhibitor project, again," the Veep growled, rubbing his forehead. "The Raleigh office has been talking to the client behind our backs and pushing the long-term angle. You know Scott's argument.

"He keeps telling me that Gunkoba, Inc., will pay us for future genetic damage studies, on the whole family of Sporidichlora-Cyanase pharmaceuticals, if we give them a low price on the rats we're testing right now. My view is that it was a coup to steal this job from CheatSmart in the first place; who knows if we'll get more work like this in the future? We can't sell ourselves short, and the proposal is due in a month.

"Somebody's got to go out there and protect our office's budget from Scott's red pen. Normally I'd do it but three other proposals are supposed to cross my desk by next Friday. I just can't spend any more time on it."

Uh-oh, here it comes, Tony realized.

"I'd like you to clear your calendar and plan on leaving next week. You'll stay there one week and make sure the proposal goes out with *our* numbers and not *theirs*."

Tony fought back a shout. This was completely unacceptable. To go to North Carolina, he'd have to leave his other jobs for a week, and blow all the vacation he'd been saving up at those other firms.

"Sure, boss, no problem. I'll have Pam book me a flight," Tony smiled cheerfully. Unfortunately there was the Corprit-'Tude aspect to think about. Even though the entire American workforce was working two or more jobs (the national average was 2.42), each manager of each job had to believe *theirs* was your number-one breadwinning position. Otherwise, if one manager suspected that you had another job to 'fall back on', you would find yourself 'phased out' when the next internal audit came.

The Veep rose, clapped him on the shoulder, muttered some thanks or compliment that Tony barely heard. Meanwhile, he tried to put aside his irritation by focusing on the opportunity. Maybe this would prove to the higher-ups that he was management material. Then the shoe would be on the other foot! Some poor loser running between three jobs would be doing the legwork for him! If he pinched pennies a little more, he could quit his other two jobs and work, maybe, 80 hours a week at one job instead of 90 hours at three jobs—not counting the savings in commute time. The extra ten hours of sleep were even more attractive than the title, the salary, or the responsibility.

Somehow that thought buoyed him up during the next eight hours of number-crunching and kept him from actually falling asleep again. But, as usual, his second shift passed with all the vigor and clarity of an out-of-body experience. He couldn't get worked-up about this Sporidichlora-Cyanase project because the crisis had been there when he was first hired; it would be there after he left; and there was no way to resolve it by working through official channels. When it came down to the wire, somebody somewhere would finally stop covering their ass long enough to make a rational decision, and the crisis would instantly evaporate. Another would spring up immediately to take its place.

He un-docked his compu-tablet at the end of his shift; as he rose from his chair, he swayed on his feet, lightheaded, like a balloon in a breeze, after working sixteen hours since he woke up at 5AM this morning. His hands quivered. Now it was almost midnight, but the nervous energy he'd relied on to push him through his shift refused to leave him. The only thing that might help unwind him was a beer or two at the nearby "RatCellar," at the end of the RatScan complex.

Down the hall, he stuffed a ten-spot into the vending machine and removed another cold bottle of StimuSoda. Absently, he swigged from the bottle so that he could focus his mind long enough to lose it in a glass of beer. Blow an hour at the RatCellar, do some envelopes at home, and still get a good four hours' sleep before his next shift began.

He couldn't remember what the weather was like when he had entered the building; so he felt unprepared for what he'd find when he left. The elevator released him into the lobby and he spilled across the tiled floor with the rest of the silent data workers. Their footsteps made a binary conversation which was not replaced by human talk until they left the double glass doors. At that point, the co-workers and acquaintances let loose a little light chatter, as if they'd been afraid their speech would emerge as numbers when they were still inside the building.

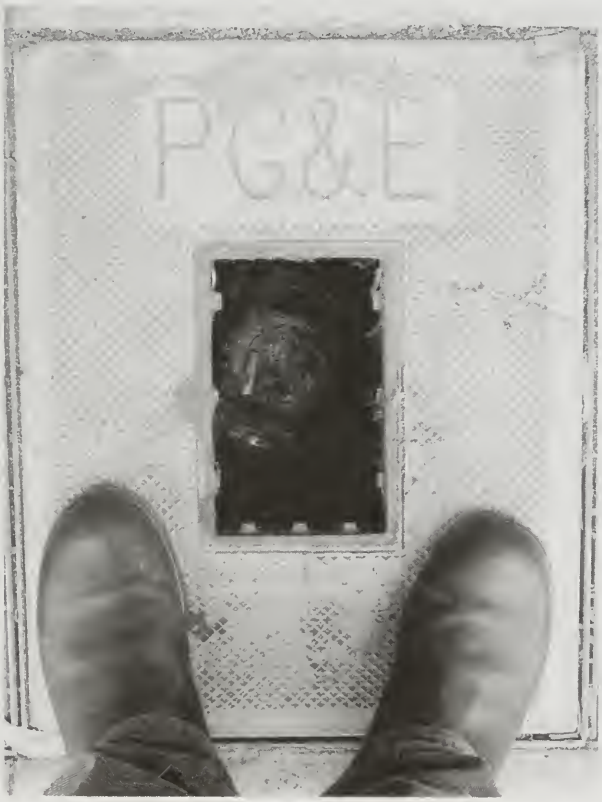
By rote, his pulse started to race as he finished the soda and checked under the cap. "SORRY! NO PRIZE! DRINK MORE!" Tony crushed the empty bottle in his

hands; it sprang back into its original shape with a plastic growl. He pitched it towards a trash can and it circled the rim a few times, reluctant to go away.

Then he looked up, across the street, and gasped. During his shift, someone had painted the TransAmerica Pyramid to resemble a bottle of StimuSoda. The garish red-and-white stripes were drawing stares from all over the block, and the occasional squeak of brakes from distracted commuters. Apparently the ad served its purpose, forcing people to read about StimuSoda's "You'll-Never-Be-Thirsty-Again" sweepstakes. ("ODDS OF WINNING APPROXIMATELY 1 IN 1.25E08") The TransAmerica building joined a group of a dozen Downtown buildings which had been done-up to resemble various products: detergents, breakfast cereal, canned soup; making the city look like the toy room or kitchen of an untidy giant.

Tony sighed. Jobs were scarce and people everywhere worked unreasonable hours just to catch up. But as if to blot out any talk of an ongoing economic crisis, the ad sector always found money for ever-more-extravagant displays: orbital billboards, exotic computer viruses that penetrated every unwilling computer screen. *Who exactly decided 'We don't have enough advertising around here yet, we need a logo on each little thumbtack head and hot dog skin.'?? Just gimme a few minutes alone with the guy in a sealed room.*

The red neon glare from the enormous StimuSoda bounced back at him from all the windows in his field of vision. But that didn't matter; he had reached the wide panes of glass marking the RatCellar. He slipped the bouncer a twenty for the cover charge. Reflexively he glanced at his receipt to see if he'd won free admission; crumpled it and tossed it into an ashtray. He stepped inside to a burst of heat and noise.



D.S. Black

Saturday night and the place was packed. A double handful of off-duty workers crowded the tiny dance floor, swaying and gyrating like the mechanism of some humanoid clock. He brushed his way to the bar and signaled for a glass of liquid anesthetic. Tony scanned around to see if there was anyone he'd like to meet.

"Every time we get close to finishing the report, the boss orders up another round of backchecks..."

"...expenses are up from the previous fiscal year..."

"...And the surveys have to be cross-correlated with Web hits and discretionary expenditures..."

Just listening to words like these jostled a part of his brain which was already numb with overuse. It felt like poking a bruised funnybone. A dark-haired woman, black slacks and a velvet coat, sauntered into the bar alone. Tony took the opportunity to launch himself away from the bar towards her. Without so much as a word of greeting or an eyeblink of acknowledgment, he slipped into her stride and bumped and grinded with her in time to the music.

A few sweaty moments were all that Tony's tired body would allow him. As the tune ended, he nudged her back towards his space at the bar and took a cool gulp of his beer. One eye on the dark-haired beauty, he flipped over his beer receipt, unsurprisingly devoid of a winner's certificate.

"Ellen," she murmured over the bar's din.

"Tony," he responded with a winning smile. "So, do you work mornings?"

"No... you?"

"Yeah," replied Tony. *Hell with the four hours' sleep.* He struggled to keep up the veneer of a smile. "Then we better not waste any more time!" she smiled coyly. "So what if I follow you home? Limo ride to work tomorrow afternoon? Movie next weekend, maybe?"

Damn, but women set their sights high these days. It wasn't as if he'd won any sweepstakes for limo service or movie tickets. Driving her to work in his beat-up '09 Toyota was unlikely to impress her friends. Magazine subscriptions, that was all he'd managed to win; obviously not the entertainment she was accustomed to. Laundry detergent for ten thousand washes. His lifetime supply of fish food wasn't much use when he couldn't afford a fishtank or any fish. Two movie tickets were basically out of the question on his budget. He mustered up a sly smile. "You may find I'm full of surprises."

"Ah-huh. And so's everyone. Too bad; you really were a good dancer. Great rhythm." She hopped off the barstool and slinked across the dance floor again. Damn! He should've played on that angle. Tony had always wanted to take up music. He had taken guitar lessons, back in high

school; but never had the time to keep it up. That would have been something to impress her with. He re-assessed the bar scene. It was a well-dressed and hungry crowd; soft voices around the dim, smoky room crossed like rapiers and cut the most suave of players down to dejected washouts left and right.

His fatigue caught up with him and he didn't feel much like competing. His resources were pretty meager right now. *Nope, can't even put-off the furniture bill this month. Those guys would repossess my bed and sofa just like THAT.* Nothing he could really spare. Time to vacate the premises and get some sleep.

* * *

Reaching his apartment, he sorted carefully through the daily pile of junk mail, pen ready. *No, I do NOT want to be billed later for a whipped-cream spritzer. No, I do NOT want to be billed later for a birthstone-sequin sweatshirt.* He hated having to do this. But ever since the Supreme Court upheld the Negative-Check-Off case, it was vital to read through all your junk mail thoroughly.

RETURN THIS FORM TO DECLINE THE PURCHASE BEING OFFERED ABOVE, OR YOUR CREDIT CARD WILL BE BILLED $599.99 ON SEPTEMBER 16, 2017.

Again the idle fantasy crossed his mind: *Whoever invented this negative check-off scam... wish I had 'em alone in a room for five minutes.* People's credit card numbers had been accessible to companies who could afford to purchase the lists for almost a decade. Speak of the devil; here was his credit card bill. As usual, he signed over his RatScan paycheck to ViMaCard and sealed the envelope. As usual, he purchased another four weeks of freedom, while adding another handful of pebbles to the landslide of debt waiting to devour him in the future.

So much for his RatScan paycheck; the ConTek paycheck was likewise gone. Now to make sure he ate next week, by stuffing ads into envelopes. To make enough money for a grocery run next week, he'd need to stuff 700 envelopes, over the next three nights, unless he gave up some of his precious day off from ConTek on Thursday. Tony took a deep breath, and tried to convince himself that he was surviving. But that was a tough task when the envelopes he stuffed netted him only $0.65 each. If he fell behind his quota, he'd be doomed to instant soup and no luxuries for at least a week.

And what a time for Storn to order him to Raleigh! He was tempted to refuse when he went back to RatScan tomorrow. But the mere fact that people had other jobs simply wasn't an excuse anymore. Everyone had to be more productive these days. If only one of his jobs could get him off the hook..

His compu-tablet beeped with a new message, startling him as his eyelids drooped. *Whew! Just as well.* Clicking the READ button, he brought it to his screen: I'M TRYING TO GET A BAND TOGETHER. PETE SAYS YOU USED TO PLAY GUITAR. INTERESTED? —CRAIG TIBRON.

At first his mind rejected the note completely. *Doesn't Craig have anything better to do than bother me at 1 AM? He knows I'm busy.* But he was too tired to hold onto the annoyance. *Craig means well. I did useta play guitar. Cool idea, nice try.* But playing in a band would mean brushing up, practicing, writing songs, booking gigs... it was too much work. Not when he had to crank out a couple hundred envelopes each night to stay on schedule, and then fight his way downtown

Dimitri Loukakos

and back twice each day just to fool his managers into thinking he actually wanted to work there instead of juggling spreadsheets, computer games, and phone calls whenever they passed his cubicle.

So instead he docked his compu-tablet to his home port, to gain the extra connection speed, and logged into the website of the lawyer who was paying him to stuff envelopes. He downloaded the advertisement letter that he was supposed to mail out to a select list of CEO's.

UNLESS YOU DECLINE BY SEPTEMBER 19, 2017, YOU WILL BE RETAINING THE SERVICES OF THE BEST CORPORATE LAWYER AROUND! LOOK WHAT J. F. LEEBAY, ESQUIRE, HAS ACCOMPLISHED IN THE ARBITRATION COURTS OF THE WORLD HEALTH-INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION.

Suddenly Tony's eyes popped halfway out of his skull. His envelope-stuffing employer, whom he'd never met and never dealt with except through a website, had taken on a legal case involving Sporidichlora-Cyanase type drugs! "TRIBUNAL UPHOLDS VIRTUAL DRUG TESTING: 'THE PROFIT POTENTIAL OF THIS FAMILY OF DRUGS IS TOO GREAT TO BE RESTRICTED BY SAFETY LAWS'," the WH/IO tribunal had concluded, in favor of Leebay's client CheatSmart—the RatScan competitor who simulated rodential genetic studies on massive supercomputers.

No way Storn would send him on a week-long assignment to Raleigh if Sporidichlora-Cyanase had already snuck around the testing laws. Gunkoba, Inc., had no conceivable need for RatScan DNA testing if the World Health-Industry courts had made this decision, which would mean anyone questioning the safety of these drugs would be subject to a fine.

In which case nobody would care about the fee numbers on a doomed proposal. He pulled that page out of his miniprinter and stood up. This was a big relief. It was tempting to drive back to RatScan immediately, to minimize the airline cancellation fee.

As he put his hand on his doorknob, though, he started second-guessing himself. What would Storn think if Tony beamed into his office tonight, a big smile on his face, and explained why the trip had to be canceled? Mr. Storn would calmly explain that they had to put out the most accurate proposal possible whether or not it was going to be accepted. It wasn't Tony's decision to make, the client might well want the study anyway to quote in its ads. Corprit-'Tude again. Managers, they were like cats: they didn't come when you called them, they had to think it was their own idea.

Would his boss read this in the paper or hear it on the news? Doubtful. Storn was probably making a half-bill a year; not enough money to spend time with his family, but enough to hire someone else to filter his news for him. This WH/IO decision would eventually get passed down to him by the legal department at RatScan, of course; but not before Tony had to leave on this trip. Tony sat down again, dejected; he almost felt a physical sensation as the week's vacation he thought he'd rescued slipped through his fingers again. He turned back to the pile of junk-mail envelopes he had to stuff.

The blood left his face again as he realized he had an edge. Storn had to read his junk mail; everybody did, nowadays. And his part-time envelope-stuffing job gave him access. In fact, mailing this information to Storn would even earn him $0.65.

He uplinked to Leebay's website, ignoring the obligatory random advertisement virus:

STARVING? AMERICORP-BANK WANTS TO HELP YOU!! YOU'LL LOVE OUR GREAT RATES ON FOOD AND CLOTHING LOANS.

He downloaded his weekly list of target addresses from his E-mail. Then he accessed the on-line telephone book and copied Storn's address to the top of his list. Enjoying his work for the first time in ages, he carefully folded a hard-copy of Leebay's newsletter and stuffed it into an envelope with Storn's address. Then Tony began printing another 700 newsletters for the other suckers on his list. What he earned after *this* licking session would be well worth the rubbery taste of envelope adhesive in his mouth tomorrow.

* * *

"I'm afraid we're going to have to distance ourselves from that proposal, Tony. If Scott's office wants to put it out with the numbers they estimated, then let Scott take the heat for it."

"But Mr. Storn," Tony protested. "Those guys at Gunkoba are counting on us. What if they need the estimates for budgeting other drug studies next year? We want to put out a quality proposal, don't we?" Inwardly, he prayed he wasn't overstating his case.

"You're right, of course, Tony," the Veep commended him. "But it's just not going to happen. A week-long trip to Raleigh for a proposal that's going to fly like a lead balloon just is not within our promo budget right now. Quality is one thing, but we're not in this for our health." ("At least, most of us aren't," he amended, shooting a quick glance at one of the bennies.) "Get back to work on the Pterygia/Pinguecula project. That one's a cash cow. The bottom line is, we make money first, and worry about quality later." His boss grinned and clapped him on the shoulder; hoping to imply that an unusually candid and truthful statement was facetious, by making light of it.

Geez, what are the odds? Tony wondered as he walked back to his desk. *That I would find that piece of information just in time to use it. Maybe there's something to this sweepstakes business after all.* Instead of sitting down, he slipped out to the corridor, paid $10 for another StimuSoda, and checked under the cap.

MARKS: A Memery

Time is money. ‹A Capitalist Proverb

Money is power. ‹Another Capitalist Proverb

Time is money's power.

All economy is economy of time. ‹Karl Marx

All money is the money of power.
Money is the power of time-economy.

Capital is money that grows. ‹An Economic Banality

Capital is money's power over time.
The economy's time grows power for money.

Money is a community that destroys all other communities. ‹Karl Marx

All community is community of time.
Capital is a power that destroys all other powers.
Community that grows destroys the power of time.

The economy is a weapon. ‹Jean Barrot

Money is a weapon that powers time.
The economy of power grows weapons.
Weapons are a community that destroys all other communities.
Work for money is a community of destroyed time.

Capital is a material God. ‹Bruce Gardner

God is a weapon.
Capital is money feeding on time.
Time that grows is God.
Money that grows is a weapon of God.
To money, time is God's material power.
Capital is a community that feeds on work, a god feeding on all other gods.
Capital is an exchange of community for time that feeds.

Dead work dominates living work. ‹Karl Marx

Dead God dominates living God.
Communities of weapons feed on dead gods.
Domination is the God of dead time.
The dead feed on God; the living, on community.

Capital in the money-form is a mask for waged work. ‹Karl Marx

Economy is a mask for the Time-God.
God's weapons are time and masks.
As capital grows masks, work grows community.
Materials bought for wages are the death-mask of work.
Masks are a community that destroys all other communities but money.

People make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing. ‹Karl Marx

Choosing is the condition of people that make their own history.
History makes conditions, but people choose whether or not to own them.
Wage work gives people choices, but choices whose conditions are masked.
People make their own gods, but not with masks of their own choosing.
History, not God, is the condition of chosen community.
Chosen history will dominate conditioned history.

The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. ‹Karl Marx

People make their own nightmares, but not under conditions of their own choosing.
God grows like history in the brain of money.
The choices of living weigh like a nightmare on the brain of tradition.
The brains of the living generate tradition as they dominate their nightmares.
Gods feed on nighmares in the brain of living work.
Money's brain weighs like God on those trying to unmask history.
Weapons generate dead choices, communities generate living ones.
Capital makes its own people, but not under conditions of its own choosing.
The future of dead work weighs like a nightmare on the brain of living work.
The dead generations are a community whose nightmares grow poetry.
The traditions of the dead revolutions weigh like capital on the poetry of the future.

History is the nightmare from which I am trying to awake.
‹James Joyce

God is the nightmare from which I am trying
to awaken history.
Capital's nightmare is the awakening of history from "I."
Dead nightmares grow living nightmares.
The economy is a nighmare from which work is
trying to awake.
The brain is a nightmare in which a living power
is awakening to choice.
History's eye is awakening to try its weapons.
The economy is a brain from which community
is trying to grow.

The social revolution must draw its poetry from the future.
‹Karl Marx

Dead futures dominate living futures.
The social revolution grows like a nightmare
under the mask of economy.
The revolutions of poetry draw futures from
the social.
All economy weighs like a nightmare on the
brain of poetry.
The economy is a poetry that destroys all
other poetries.
The poetry of the dead draws choices from
the brains of the living.
Capital grows futures, but not for the history
of its own choosing.
The social revolution must grow its future
from poetry.
Poetry is a community that feeds all other
communities.

Poetry is a weapon loaded with future.
‹Gabriel Celaya

Wage work is a weapon loaded with nightmare.
God is the loaded poetry of economy.
The economy is a living weapon loaded with past.
The future loads its weapons with the poetry
of generation.
Money is a weapon loaded with dead choosing.
The future is a weapon that capital loads with nightmare
revolutions.
Dead poetry is a weapon loaded with awakenings.
All poetry is poetry of history.
Community is a weapon powered with the brains
of the living.
Poetry must load its future from the social revolution.
All dead history is history of weapons.
The future of revolution is social poetry.

—Adam Cornford

Debating the Military Budget

Radical Politics:
Assuming We Refuse, Let's Refuse to Assume

by Chris Carlsson

I knew something different was happening when I saw Suits outside a luxury hotel imploring demonstrators to let them pass. The demonstrators, arms locked, resolutely refused. The protestors smiled, they were cordial but firm. One businessman became frantic and circled back from the line of protesters and suddenly walked quickly towards the line, assuming his personal authority would lead to the people parting and letting him pass. Violating all our assumptions about personal space and territorial imperatives, they didn't. Not only that, he quickly found himself dogged by a longhaired demonstrator who made it is his personal mission to stay in his face until he left.

Seattle on November 30, 1999 was a surprising breakthrough in radical politics. Or was it? Clearly it was a victorious day for disparate and usually disorganized forces opposed to the juggernaut of capitalist globalization. A spirit of unity and strength snowballed during the day as blockade after blockade withstood the pleadings of businessmen and the physical violence of the Seattle police. In the aftermath of this exhilarating day, pundits and analysts of all stripes have tried mightily to pinpoint the meaning and future of this newly visible movement.

I see the anti-WTO Seattle demonstrations, and those that have followed, as a more visible and successful form of protest than anything in the preceding twenty years. But it hasn't left me feeling particularly victorious or even that optimistic. The daunting tasks associated with an anti-capitalist revolution are hard to face.

The current social movement against global capitalism (as seen in Seattle, Washington, Prague and Quebec) has no concrete vision of an alternative to capitalism. The new anti-capitalism has done well at mobilizing thousands to protest the big institutional forms of capitalism, but not much to define changes in daily life that may ensue from the transformation implied by the anti-capitalist agenda.

Since the various "1960s" movements were defeated or ran their course, people have learned an enormous amount about how to self-manage group processes, handle sexism and racism, and promote a culture of egalitarianism and participation. Anti-nuclear, peace, anti-poverty, and identity politics movements have provided a rich training ground during the last quarter century. This has greatly strengthened our abilities to contest the global capitalist system within our daily lives.

This germinating culture of resistance must go beyond young radicals who like reclaiming streets, riding bicycles or protesting multinational corporations. People who are usually dismissed as "average Americans" will also have to see their advantage in embracing an agenda of radical change. Those of us already committed to radical politics must develop enormous reservoirs of patience. It will take a sustained effort over the long haul to bring about change so deep that it recasts our whole conception of work, economy, and life itself.

I want to articulate a life worth living, one that inspires passionate commitment and engagement, and presents practical choices in daily life. After more than twenty years in and around radical political projects and movements, I want to stop and re-think. I want to get out of the familiar "box" in which our political efforts seem to remain stuck.

The walls of this box are made up in part of assumptions among anti-authoritarian grassroots movements and groups that I've been part of for years: unstated assumptions about power and leadership, organizational forms and institutionalization. We believe in a radical vision that for the most part we cannot articulate, and we repeat self-defeating tactics out of habit and a misplaced urgency to "do something." Dissatisfied with my own pat answers, I want at least to deepen our inquiry, even if I still don't solve the problems satisfactorily.

Utopia or what is it we really want?

> The problem is that without a vision of Utopia there is no way to define that port to which we might want to sail. —David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, p. 190

Most political activity is reactive and contrary, demanding a halt to this or that excess, perhaps sprinkled with rhetoric calling for an end to capitalism, all too often depending on a neo-Christian moral guilt over so-called "greed." A more fundamental critique of the system is lacking, and an articulated alternative is completely absent.

It is common for radicals in our era to describe easily what they are against, but when it comes to what we are for, a painful silence descends. (A couple of notable exceptions are Ken Knabb's "The Joy of Revolution" in his collected skirmishes *Public Secrets*, and Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel's *Looking Forward*.) If anyone is ready to talk about a different way of life at all, it is in vague terms that defy ready application.

No one is ever going to get excited about radical social change if it doesn't promise to make their life much better

in clearly demonstrable ways. Generally, advocates of an anti-capitalist future have completely ignored this basic problem of . . . what shall we call it?. . . imaginative exploration . . . education . . . marketing? Most attempts to convince people to join oppositional political movements depend on moral outrage, shame, guilt, fear and appeals to fairness. This is understandable, but it also underlines why radical politics attracts such a relatively small part of the population.

American society brags to itself through the mass media that it is the best of all possible worlds. People tend to go along with this, at least to the point of utter skepticism regarding suggestions that there could be a much better system. I think skepticism, reinforced daily by the mightiest propaganda machine in history, will only be assuaged by an exciting, appealing and credible alternative to the status quo. There are no compelling visions of this alternative in circulation. This is an era that rejects utopian thinking, either because it is by definition impossible, or because it is conflated with the totalitarian nightmares of the 20th century. To dream of a more just, pleasurable and well-organized life is somehow to believe in a totalizing system in which all aspects of human life that don't fit the new model are forcibly banished.

This is a poverty of imagination. Radical change can erupt from any number of sources and lead in unexpected directions. We have stopped imagining a better life. We limit our thoughts to tinkering with the more obvious inequities of the status quo. The old opposition between 'radical' and 'reformer' finds its current incarnation among us in those who fight for a total transformation versus those who see the battle in terms of incremental change. To the radical, the minor changes achieved by reformers don't seem worth fighting for, or can even be seen as making things inadvertently worse. To the reformer, the sweeping change advocated by radicals seems naïve or dogmatically prescriptive. In the face of this ready criticism, radicals are hesitant to declare for any particular set of proposals. This hesitance, in turn, leaves us politically weakened, incapable of going beyond a generalized yearning for an undefined 'better,' afraid of the authority established by any choice of specific institutional and material relations. But if we won't assert the authority of any specific alternative vision, the fundamental social question about "valid authority" is abdicated to moralistic nuts and neoliberal free marketeers.

One of the intellectual problems that radicals have had in articulating what they want stems from an anti-authoritarian impulse to resist defining goals because to do so would be inherently authoritarian. If one person, or a small group, lays out a "blueprint" everyone else is supposed to embrace and adapt to, that perfectly contradicts the radical goal of a self-directed movement of generalized social liberation.

I often answer critics in conversation that I cannot lay out the institutional form or mechanisms of a new way of life. It remains for people in motion in the future to make radical change and create out of necessity and collective vision the institutional forms of the new life. That still sounds right, but I am quite dissatisfied with that answer, which is just as easily interpreted as a total cop-out.

Chris Carlsson *by Mona Caron*

> ... the faith in the spontaneous creative powers of revolutionary action [has] disarmed the constructive political imagination of the left...
>
> —(Roberto Unger, *False Necessity: Anti-necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*, Cambridge 1987, cited in *Spaces of Hope,* (UC Press, 2000), David Harvey, p. 188)

It boils down to accepting a type of social power. Any vision embraced, once adopted in the real world, precludes other visions. Any choice we make about how we'd like life to be arranged closes off other options. Instead of refusing to articulate anything, out of fear of imposing our visions (on helpless victims?), and thereby create a new form of authority, let's accept the fact that stating our preferences

and visions IS a form of authority. Moreover, it is an acceptable form that enjoys only the power that it gains as other people embrace and share our vision. Of course articulating such a vision is predicated on the notion that anyone could do the same, and that everyone should be encouraged to do so.

Ideally, I imagine a social upheaval that puts numerous well-spoken agitators before the public, addressing a range of issues, articulating a variety of goals, maybe even constituting together a utopian vision of a different way of life. If such a time arrives we can be sure it will not be tidy, it will not automatically find a consensus, and it will require a great deal of strenuous discussion and argument. This is something I look forward to eagerly.

That said, I am also presently stymied by a problem of tactical imagination. What are the approaches, activities, and organizations that might overcome the dead-end of reforms that actually strengthen the status quo—but do it by articulating ideas and reaching goals that are genuine steps toward a life beyond capitalism? What are practical activities that make our lives better now AND move us forward in terms of revolution, but avoid the boomerang of reformist co-optation?

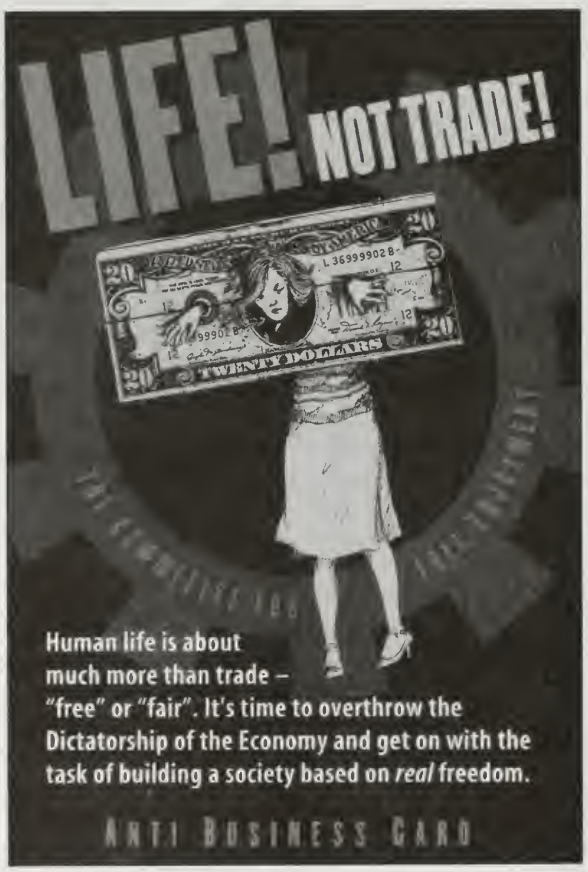
I was in Seattle for the anti-WTO protests in November 1999. I also went to Washington DC to protest the IMF and World Bank in April 2000. My associates and I (the Committee for Full Enjoyment) played drums and did support work in the streets for folks who were putting their bodies on the line in lockdowns. We also prepared printed materials in which we called for a more radical approach than the common demands of the protesters.

In Seattle we distributed an anti-business card called "Life Not Trade" which went considerably beyond the liberal demand for "fair trade, not free trade." In April we once again took off, this time to Washington DC to protest the IMF/World Bank meetings, and this time handing out a different card called the Debt Wipe Card, a satirical anti-credit card calling for "Gifts Not Debts!" The two pieces varied from each other in certain respects but each featured these words in conclusion:

"*We are here in the spirit of a real alternative, maybe we should call it the Global Association of Gift Givers (GAGG). The passion for life is the same passion that convinces us that together we can make life what we want it to be. In the streets we have re-created the public commons, at least temporarily. We reject trade, free or fair, for trade reinforces the pecuniary mentality that reduces human life to the arbitrary measurement of its products, to the Economy. As free people we can live better, work less (and enjoy the pleasure of the work we deem worthwhile) and provide an unprecedented level of material comfort to everyone on the planet. . . When we abolish the Economy, we will see the world with new eyes, new energy, new possibilities. We make the world everyday when we return to work for them. Why not make the world we want to live in instead?*"

These words resonated for many participants in the protest movement. They are important to me, too, because they go beyond the usual smorgasbord of tepid reforms and empty demands. But I must confess, they ring rather hollow as soon as you try to apply them to the real world, to imagine what actions we might take immediately to begin reaching for the world these words describe.

One of the self-imposed problems this kind of thinking has created is an inability to embrace any goals other than the most sweeping imaginable. But that position soon resembles a religious one that posits a complete simultaneous, spontaneous transformation of everyone everywhere. In this extreme position I am seeking a change that is without historic precedent or any connection to real people living in the real world. I scorn intermediate goals as muddled reformism and liberal cooptation.



Having participated for years in maintaining this impossible conundrum I am fed up with being stuck. This does not mean I want to turn to electoral politics or the tired ideas of the old or new left or liberals. But it does mean I don't feel at ease with the constant rejection of every initiative that anyone tries in this culture.

Revolutions do happen, and social institutions can be radically altered—even abolished—in short periods of time. But to presuppose a total change as the definition of an acceptable political program, and to have no ideas of intermediate, achievable goals is finally a failure of practical imagination.

designs by Hugh D'Andrade for the Committee for Full Enjoyment

You're *Pre*-Approved!

Note: Card may not be honored by corporations and other institutions whose goal is to reduce life to a series of market transactions.

Leadership

I have been part of several projects* over the past decades that eschewed formal leadership structure. Nevertheless, many people who came into contact with these projects concluded that I was the leader. If asked, I would urgently insist that I was not the leader, that in fact there was no leader, that the collective as a whole was the source of power and decision-making.

That was true, too, and I certainly never have had anything like unfettered, unchallenged control over any project. In fact, I lost collective votes on numerous occasions. But within the day-to-day life of a project I have taken initiatives, made decisions that shaped the direction of events, established and extended the personal relationships that led to the participation of new contributors, and so on. (Similarly, while I am the author of this piece, the ideas expressed are a product of intense discussions with friends over the past months and years, and thus the arguments are "mine" only in that derivative and collaborative sense.)

My own ideological leanings are informed by emotional and personal preferences. I yearn for a world of peers. I narcissistically wish for a life filled up with different people who are a lot like me! I don't want them to think like me and march in lockstep with my opinions or theories, but I want them to have the same energy, willpower, ability to project themselves, organize activities, frame questions, and dynamically challenge everyone around them to reach new levels of excitement and insight. With that in mind, I've always clung to the idea that "leadership" is bad, hierarchy is a problem, and that everyone should be equal. I still feel this way.

There is a profound contradiction at the heart of this. I believe in human freedom, that each person should have the maximum ability to become him/herself. In other words, I believe in maximum human differentiation—the more unique every person is, the richer all our lives become. If that is true, doesn't it follow that some people are more extroverted, verbally precocious, self-confident, organizationally adept, inclined to take the initiative, etc., while others are more introverted, shy, less vocal, less public, not assertive, self-deprecating, and so on? This simple truth in any group or endeavor leads to something approaching a "natural" division of labor, which I consider an inevitable and useful feature of human society.

No one is inherently incapable of change or taking on different traits or roles over the course of a life. But let's face it, at any given moment, in any given group or project, different people are going to play different roles based on a wide variety of preferences, predispositions, talents, and desires. This is so obvious that it may seem pointless to bring it up. But the problem arises in political projects when this differentiation manifests itself and the group bogs down in bickering and fighting, even sometimes into name-calling, as those behaving as "leaders" find themselves attacked and blamed for creating this differentiation out of some Macchiavellian power grab.

This underscores a profound poverty of philosophy and political savvy in our culture. In our healthy rejection of

* *Processed World* magazine and *Shaping San Francisco* (the interactive multimedia excavation of the lost history of San Francisco) are perhaps the most prominent examples. I also had an important role in launching Critical Mass in San Francisco, but in that case my role as a "leader" was quickly overcome by the rapid and widespread embrace of the event by thousands of others, both in San Francisco and elsewhere. Less prominent, short-term groups such as the Union of Concerned Commies, the Anti-Economy League of San Francisco, the Committee for Full Enjoyment, and the Department of Public Art also inform these ruminations (as do my earlier participation in the anti-nuclear movement, farmworker and textile worker solidarity campaigns, and an incipient union drive at a bookstore).

vanguardist politics and patriarchal social assumptions, we have lost a sense of "power" in the practical sense. The power to move people with words, to organize and finish projects, to facilitate wide participation, are just a few of the qualities of social power that we don't know how to evaluate and discuss without descending into clichés about domination and oppression rooted in assumptions derived from the dominant culture.

The successful perpetuation of political resistance depends on individuals banding together and taking action. People use power with—rather than on—each other to act in the world. In the best cases, anti-authoritarian groups encourage all their participants to be powerful—both within the group and vis-à-vis the outside world. This kind of power is different from the kind that elevates someone to a leadership position from which they hierarchically rule.

An egalitarian theory of practical social power needs to be specific about kinds of power, and its connection to other parts of life. For instance, if you need surgery, you want someone who is an expert surgeon. But just because someone is an expert surgeon, she shouldn't necessarily derive fixed social benefits or power from that talent. By extension, if someone performs the role of leader in a given movement or group or project, it is important to define the scope of that leadership, how it is held accountable to the larger community (or communities), and to prevent the extension of that leadership into a fixed, privileged status in society.

In the Washington DC protests against the IMF/World Bank in April 2000 this tension played itself out. At the Spokescouncil meetings, where in the days directly preceding the direct action over 100 affinity groups sent representatives to hammer out a consensus on tactics to "shut down" the IMF, various individuals who had been prominent meeting facilitators in Seattle in November 1999 were again running the meetings. I heard various people grumbling about what they perceived as a problem of "authoritarian manipulation" by these same individuals. This charge seemed absurd to me. In fact, running a complicated, multipolar meeting to coordinate a type of urban wargame was a very daunting job, and I was impressed by how well they did it, and how open they actually were to the participation of everyone present.

It is true that a lot of decisions had been made prior to these Spokescouncil meetings. Discussion had taken place by email and through a series of meetings around the country, both within small affinity groups and between and among them. The gathering in DC was premised on accepting the general parameters of the action. Still, there was bitter disagreement on the spot. There were those who felt they had a right to participate whether or not they agreed to the definitions of nonviolence that had been promulgated by the organizers. And there were those who felt that if you were going to be part of the effort, you had a moral obligation to refrain from any kind of violence against propert or police. That dispute remained unresolved. Some people consider that a reason to withdraw from the movement, others are tolerant of the fact that there is always going to be disagreement on this precise issue.

But it is noteworthy that the organizers and meeting facilitators did not elevate themselves to being an ongoing committee, leaders of a new national organization, or anything remotely resembling the old model. Clearly this would have happened twenty or thirty years earlier. I consider the ad-hoc nature of the power exercised by the leaders in DC and Seattle an excellent example of the kind of power we need to be comfortable with in order to succeed in our social movements. It is the kind of power that happily disappears when the specific reasons for its existence pass.

Institutionalization
or the problem of fighting for the long haul without becoming comfortably dependent on the way things are

How do we launch political opposition in entirely ad-hoc and short-term ways again and again without having to reinvent the wheel each time? Can we have ongoing, long-term political resistance that doesn't turn into a kind of alternative business? How do we pay for staff, offices, phones and equipment, and keep a focused oppositional political movement alive if not through selling t-shirts and

What If? A Journal of Radical Possibilities

$8.00 ISBN 0-9709089-0-3
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This is a wonderful new journal. As the title indicates, it focuses on the question of utopia, of imagining a life worth living. Editor Christy Rodgers sets the stage, detailing the lamentable history of the past two decades and characterizing the repression and cooptation of utopian ideas as "kill the best and buy the rest." Still, she declares "there continue to be true—and growing—expressions of utopian dreaming given form all around us, all the time." A welcome look back at English revolutionaries from the Diggers of the 1640s to William Morris in the 1890s starts it off. Wise Fool Puppet Intervention and David Solnit of Art & Revolution Convergence are given a long look in a couple of thoughtful pieces appreciating their important contributions to the anti-capitalist events in Seattle and beyond. Home schooling gets a look, and amidst some future visions is a newly rewritten version of Adam Cornford's "Death of a Nation," originally published in Processed World #30 in 1992. We send a hearty congratulations and welcome to ***What If?***

—Chris Carlsson

coffee mugs, bake sales, seeking support from foundations and large donors? Can we grow our political opposition without institutionalizing our organizational forms? Can we make sure practical knowledge is shared and spread without institutionalizing that process?

If we don't institutionalize ourselves, with organizations, resources (computers, printing presses, radio stations, video production facilities, meeting rooms, offices, homes, etc.) and the like, we have to re-acquire access every time we begin organizing on a new project. On the other hand, as we seek greater permanence and reliability, we tend to duplicate resources and infrastructure, since our efforts tend to be highly localized and specific. If we share space and media equipment across issues, groups, time and space, we can make much greater use of the limited resources we have.

Currently it is common to create small businesses and collectives to acquire productive resources, sell our skills and resources to "movement" groups (and the open market), and maintain the necessary infrastructure that way. But that leaves it all tangled up in the structures of small business and profitability. I've brought print jobs or video projects to collectively-owned businesses and found they need to charge nearly the same as any business to do it. Similarly, I have a small typesetting and graphics arts business. I do a lot of free work for interesting political projects, but I reserve the right to decide, and no one else has a right to my labor or my facilities. So where's the "movement" at that moment? The small business model, even collectively owned, is a poor solution to the problem of continuity and sustained resistance. (Granted, it is often a much better solution to the problems of personal survival than working for "The Man".)

Learning from the anarchists of the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s, the anti-nuclear and peace movements organized into small affinity groups. This model re-emerged to fight the WTO in Seattle in 1999, the IMF and World Bank in DC and Prague in 2000, and the FTAA in Quebec in 2001. This anti-institutional, ad-hoc movement is based on small affinity groups that come together to organize specific actions as part of the larger demonstration. The affinity groups thus avoid being subsumed into the logic of small business. They also avoid the bureaucratization and salaried hierarchies of ongoing nonprofit organizations. There is no need to maintain structures of property, ongoing expenses for offices and equipment, etc. Being rooted in local small groups is one of the anti-capitalist movement's greatest strengths, both depending on and reinforcing real communities and face-to-face networks of neighbors and friends.

One of the most notable qualities of the affinity group structure is the dependence on meetings and consensus. This is both a strength and a social liability. The tyranny of meetings, especially those run by consensus, can be extremely exhausting and often demoralizing. When it works, it can be a source of genuine collective euphoria. But it tends to burn people out and often leaves a trail of bitter feelings in its wake. This derives in part from the questions of power addressed above, and our difficulties in facing and handling creatively the inevitable differentiation among people in any group.

There is also an implicit assumption that the affinity group is somehow a prefigurative formation of the kind of life we want to live in the future. In that respect it becomes an agent of subcultural exclusion. Not everyone is inclined to organize their lives through face-to-face meetings and consensus. It attracts some personalities and political ideologies, and repels many others. The same could be said about most institutional forms.

For those who are part of an affinity group, and have participated in the political movements of the past quarter cen-

Minna Eloranta

from *The Wasp*, c. 1875, courtesy the Bancroft Library

tury, it is hard to accept that for lots of people it is precisely the anonymity and lack of responsibility that daily life in the capitalist market provides that makes them feel "free." You get your money from your job and you spend it however you see fit, privately and anonymously. There is no accountability for the meaning of the work you do (if someone pays you, that's all that matters), nor for the invisible social costs of what you consume. There is a great freedom to the individual in this arrangement, and one that advocates of social revolution and human liberation must take into account when they propose an alternative life based on a high level of accountability and responsibility.

With this in mind, we might be better off describing our goals in other terms than 'freedom', even if we believe that it is crucial to free ourselves from the logic of buying and selling. Our society is increasingly characterized by emptiness, isolation, alienation, and fragmentation. It is a society that craves "community" and human conviviality so much that cults and religions easily find new recruits in spite of their patently absurd belief systems.

Our self-perpetuating youth culture, driven and reinforced by consumer society, encourages us individually and collectively to remain in a state of arrested development. The youthful rebellions of the past decades, so easily co-opted into fashion and shopping, repudiated authority uncritically. The predictable result is the social equivalent of a child with negligent parents: a rootless society lacking in meaning or purpose in which individuals are treated like children. At work we are told what to do, and if we have the temerity to ask why, the inevitable answer is every parent's cop-out: because that's the way it is.

As we seek a balance between our revolutionary impulses and our need to nurture and sustain a revolutionary movement—perhaps across generations—we cannot avoid grappling with the dialectic of personal freedom and social accountability. Accountability is always a form of authority, and a necessary part of a liberated future. Our yearning for community is at some point antithetical to the yearning for freedom. We seek recognition, appreciation and accountability in community—precisely the qualities absent in our anonymous 'freedom' as wage slaves and consumers.

As we think about institutionalization, we face our own mortality, our own issues about "settling down," building a home, and making commitments. The frenzied life we've adapted to under late capitalism is defined by a high degree of personal mobility and choice. Can we embrace stability and rootedness in a way that enhances our quality of life? Can we build new institutions that embody a new way of life instead of being responsive to the dictatorship of economic efficiency? Can we build lasting institutions that transcend the need for charismatic individuals to hold them together? And what are these new institutions to do?

The Tactical Cul-de-Sac, or the problem of identifying and using real social power

In Seattle an exciting coalition appeared. Direct action anarchists, mainstream labor unionists, environmentalists and third world solidarity activists united to protest the

WTO. For a brief time it seemed that this new coalition had really changed the nature of social opposition. But by the time April 2000 rolled around and a similar effort was made to "shut down" the World Bank/IMF meetings in Washington DC, it was clear that the coalition already had returned to its original fragments, and was not unified in tactics or strategy, and certainly not unified in a shared vision.

I have experience during the past twenty years in all of these so-called movements. I am critical of all of them but I prefer to encourage the parts of each that advance our efforts to a more thorough, far-reaching oppositional movement. What Seattle really showed all of us who were there was that we are MUCH stronger in our unity than any of us are alone. This is the oldest lesson of revolution.

The distinctive elements of the "Seattle coalition" are not revolutionary when taken alone. Their goals are partial and reformist (except perhaps the anarchists, but they are the same people who really need to help answer the questions raised in this piece). The social power these groups wield is largely a matter of public perception or the lack thereof; in other words, the solidarity activists, ecologists, and labor activists all depend on getting attention in the mass media as their primary lever of power. The surprisingly successful seizure of downtown Seattle during the WTO re-introduced us all to the occupation of public space as a form of social power. Even while it was underway, however, bitter fights broke out among the occupiers about the behavioral norms of the occupation, obliquely endorsing the propaganda counterattack that sought to invalidate the entire protest on the grounds that some protesters were "naughty." This latter technique is used during every "successful" protest or direct action (which become recorded as instances in which things "got out of control"). The use of force, however nonviolently, is always deemed a greater affront and violation than the blatantly violent behavior that passes as "normal business practices" in the world market.

Following Seattle, activists tried to re-create the coalition and dynamics in Washington DC and again at the political conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles in summer 2000. The preparations of the authorities (who were delighted to radically increase their security budgets in the wake of Seattle) prevented similar achievements. Also, most trade unionists, solidarity activists and mainstream environmentalists were dissuaded from participating, either because they were afraid of the violence (that the state would provide, even if the protesters didn't), or because they didn't want to be associated with what had become an "extremist" approach. European protesters took up the fight during the September 2000 IMF/World Bank meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, where again they succeeded in exercising the social power of occupying public space. In April 2001, activists from the Americas descended on Quebec City to contest the well-guarded elite's plans to endorse a Free Trade Area of the Americas. Canadian police enclosed a large area of the city behind barricades, and attacked protesters with impunity, but participants emerged energized and buoyed by the successful protest on the ground in Quebec and international media coverage.

Anyone who has been in a major urban riot and has walked the deserted streets behind the lines of confrontation has had a taste of liberated space. A similar sensation comes in the wake of earthquakes, floods, blackouts, so-called "natural" disasters. But the everyday liberation of social space requires not just a spasm of refusal and disobedience, or an unpredictable and occasional event, but a creative reinhabitation of the spaces in which we live as an everyday truth. What is most notably suspended during these brief tastes of liberated space is business as usual. People stay home from work and school. Strangers are suddenly your friends. It is common to extend a helping hand and to feel the connected euphoria of real human community. Seattle and the rest gave all their participants a major dose of this intensely seductive experience.

Our mass market culture channels desires for collective euphoria into mass spectator sports and religion. My goal as a revolutionary is to link the desire for shared experiences, community, and collective euphoria to more spaces in which we can live without "business as usual." The two major components of "business as usual" are working and shopping. Interestingly, Bay Area elements of the Reclaim the Streets movement have recently embraced the "Buy Nothing" concept as an extension of the ongoing campaign to reclaim public space. "Proletarian shopping" (mass shoplifting) is another phenomenon that radically attacks the shopping side of the equation, and establishes a temporary zone of collective, affirmative action. Both approaches have radical moments, but in the end suffer from being initiatives shaped by a world already made at work.

Most of our assumptions about the "real world" are profoundly shaped by our experiences at work, the place where we reproduce ourselves, where we "pull our own weight" and make a contribution (we hope) to society's general well-being. And it is at work that most people are more fragmented, disconnected and isolated than ever before. The redesign of work away from individual craftsmanship and an integrated knowledge of any particular line of endeavor is far advanced. Henry Ford applied Frederick Taylor's time-and-motion research to increasing the intensity of work through dividing it into ever smaller, more measurable and more easily controlled tasks. In the past quarter century, the twin processes of exporting the dirtiest jobs to faraway countries and automating the ones that remain has turned a large portion of the workforce into temporary, contingent, semi-skilled workers who shift from job to job, industry to industry, as the needs of business dictate. Most workers today have very limited knowledge of the purpose of their work, or how it fits in to the larger processes that lead to real goods and services. The transience in workplaces has done a great deal to prevent attempts

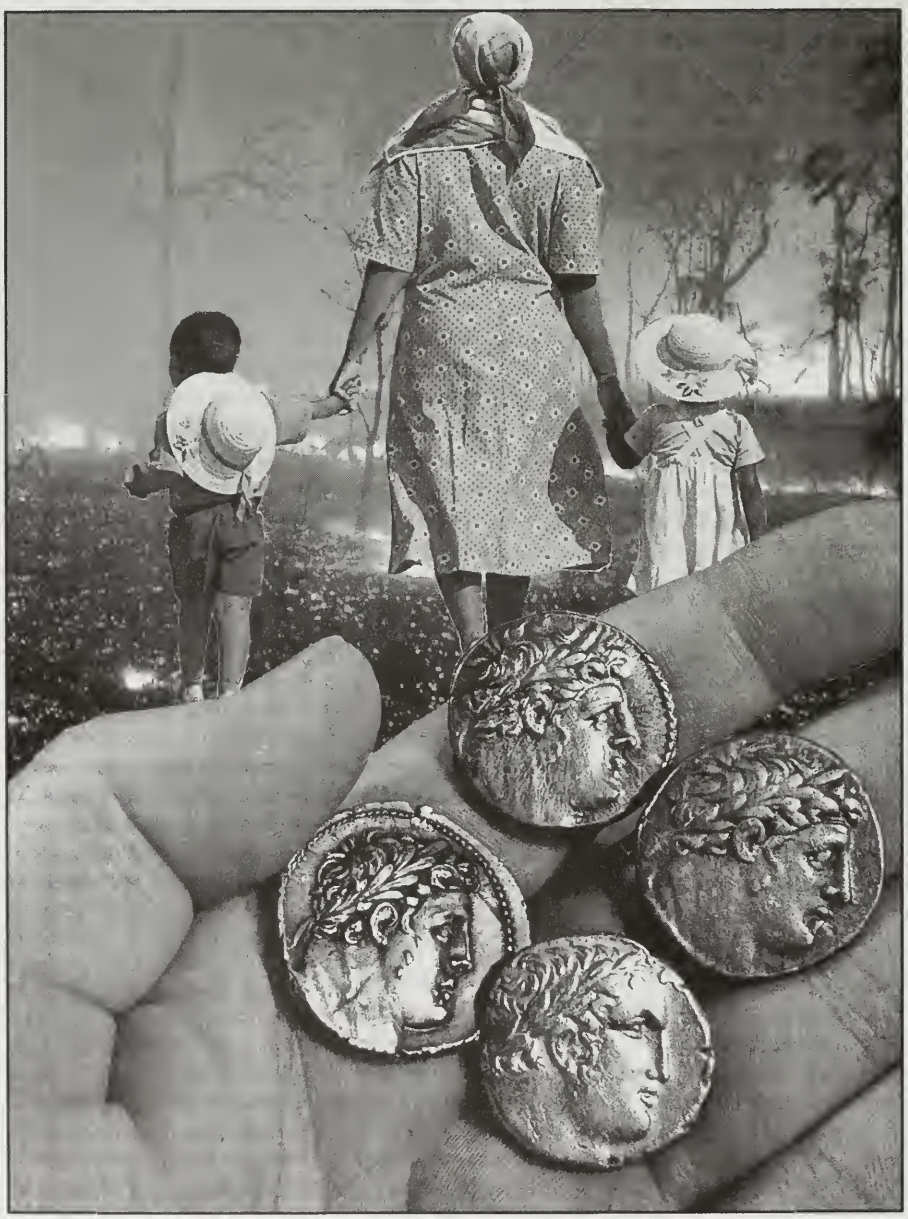
to build new kinds of workplace-based communities and organizations (unions being the most formal example).

Organized and Disorganized Labor

Members of the early *Processed World* collective believed that the existing trade unions were part of the problem, not the solution. We saw most workplace organizing as being inherently conservative insofar as people were motivated by a desire to protect their status as wage-workers, perhaps to gain a bit more wages and benefits.

And yet we held fast to the idea that workplace organizing was the key to any future successful revolt. I still think this. But workplace organizing not directed at abolishing wage-labor and money seems counterproductive. And yet, how can one get organized on the job, win over wavering coworkers who aren't sure they're ready to join up, gain a majority of folks as active allies, when your goal is to abolish the whole set-up of daily life? It doesn't make much sense in the absence of a larger culture of revolt. It makes even less sense in the absence of a social vision of a life beyond the Economy, where human time is freely shared, production and distribution is freely organized by those who do the work, etc.

This is a very serious problem. Radical revolt depends on overthrowing the reproduction of everyday life, in large part at the point of production (and distribution). If people are organizing on the job, it is always to gain protection from arbitrary bosses, to improve wages and benefits, or to assert a right to control some aspect of the workplace. How does getting organized to defend oneself now (in a given historic moment of the capitalist division of labor) lead to an *assertive* collectivity that may eventually take over everything? In asking this question I paint myself into the corner. There is no room for radical steps between the first goal and the total change. In the worst case, this leads to a numbing paralysis or a disdainful, condescending participation in struggles that I already think are going in the wrong direction!



collage by Raven

Moreover it doesn't take into account the overwhelming transience that plagues the structure of work. Few people remain at the same job or workplace more than a few years. New workers are expected to be good, fast learners and multi-talented, able to shift from task to task. Work is so thoroughly structured in most places that the workers are easily replaced. Mounting any kind of ongoing, organized resistance at a given workplace depends on trust and familiarity between the workers. These are not qualities easily attained when you've only known each other for a few weeks or months, and then only through the strained "niceness" of corporate culture.

Opening spaces in this closed world of work—physical or virtual—where people can connect is a crucial step. Organizing campaigns introduce the reality of workers taking action together for their own needs—openly different than the company's needs. The role of trade unions in channeling and curbing the direction of such campaigns is important history to share so such movements can avoid the obvious pitfalls of the past.

In the spirit of a difficult compromise with the "real world" workplace organizing around immediate demands is crucial, even if it falls under a typical (conservative and/or corrupt) trade union. History is littered with the failed efforts of radical reformers to "take over" unions from bad leaders and corrupt regimes. The point for me is not to worry about taking over the larger organizations but to make vital on an everyday basis the fight over the terms of daily life at work. If the union becomes an obstacle (as it tends to if your efforts exceed their narrow agenda) that just reinforces the need to make alliances across the boundaries of occupation, workplace, neighborhood, municipality, and nationality.

Organizing on the job brings people together in a basic conspiracy. Workers together can alter the rhythms of work, open up free time for each other, and divert resources to other ends than that on which the company is focused. They can also force the company to take profits and plow them back into wages and benefits. In the best case, organizing on the job can create counter-institutions at work that eventually become the framework for disempowering the managers and self-managing the job. Though this, in itself, leaves unchallenged what the company actually does, it sets the stage for a collective approach to deeper questions.

Doing Nothing is Sometimes Something
(or Slow Down the Speed-Up)

One of the most painful ironies of this era has to be the amazing overwork of radical activists. So many people drawn to political movements during this long difficult period have found themselves overwhelmed by the amount of work needed to mount a demonstration, carry on an educational campaign, publish a 'zine or book, organize a union, fight a company. Time and again activists burn out over low or no wages, very long hours, bizarre interpersonal relationships with others who seem to have unresolved psychological problems, and a general anxiety that comes from being a tiny underdog in a world that goes to the victors.

It's too common for those who are most capable and interested to get so pulled in that they sacrifice important aspects of their humanity. Many are attending meetings every day, going to every important demonstration and event, organizing all their friends all the time to the point where they only have friends who are part of their organizing efforts. The ready use of guilt and shame to keep people doing work for free or very little is routine. The guilt or pressure that drives people to overwork and over-participate is itself a crippling quality.

By the mid-1970s, "the personal is political" became a slogan justifying many people's choice to drop out of formal political activity. The overwork and psychological distress common to political activism pushed many people to define their lifestyle choices as a sufficient contribution to political change. Unfortunately, for too many, taking a political stand has come to mean shopping properly.

The underbelly of this critique, however, is the implication that to be "truly" political we must "do something"—something more than just shop well. It's true that our effort to pursue a revolutionary agenda requires creative action and steady public participation. But, the urge to "do something" often leads to demonstrations and political forms (in print and on the streets) that are utterly unimaginative, dogmatic, repetitive, and profoundly self-defeating. As someone who has marched in countless demonstrations, published scores of flyers, posters and 'zines, and participated in dozens of street theater interventions, I admit to feeling depressed, less powerful and less effective after a demonstration.

The Seattle movement was launched by West Coast activists who led the way with colorful giant puppets and other new forms of creative protest. They have pioneered an exciting break with the visible style of leftist protest that dominated the past decades, and it has been exhilarating to be a part of it. Nevertheless, the urgency to attend rallies, create puppets, organize demonstrations and the like, itself reproduces the pattern of taking action without a clear idea of where we're going. And—unfortunately—the use of giant puppets (for example) doesn't really break with the familiar leftism of reactive protest and help us move to the offensive.

"The personal is political" was an important reintroduction of subjective values and experience to the political landscape. In that sense it parallels the age-old concern for ensuring consistency between means and ends. Participants in a renewed radical movement must find ways to live well *now*—not based on sacrifice and guilt, nor defined by a deferred gratification that will come "after the revolution."

"Living well is the best revenge," goes the saying. Resisting overwork and self-sacrifice is an important radical goal in itself. If we aren't enjoying our lives and finding fulfillment in human connections, our ability to sustain a long-term revolutionary effort is compromised. We need to take the time to develop our philosophical and political depth, study history, ecology, and technology, and practice imagining the world we want to live in. If we cannot trust each other to take the lead, create lasting institutions, articulate more clearly where we're trying to go, and create living examples (insofar as it's possible) of the way we want to live, we will have a hard time convincing others to join us. We have to make it clear that we're fighting for a world dramatically better than the insane world of today.

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BACAT has been sponsor to numerous alternative, nonprofit media projects, from *Processed World* magazine and Paper Tiger Television, to *Shaping San Francisco*, the *Haight Ashbury Literary Journal*, *Project Face to Face*, the San Francisco Film Archive, CESTA: the Cultural Exchange Station in Tabor (Czech Republic), and Komotion International. Dance companies, performance artists, visual artists, videographers and musicians have all benefited from the fiscal sponsorship of BACAT since its inception.

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